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MY PARISH;

OR,

"The Country Parson's" Visits to his Poor.

Preparing for Publication.

A SECOND SERIES

OF

MY PARISH;

OR,

"THE COUNTRY PARSON'S" VISITS TO HIS POOR

Which will be published early in 1857.

Mary How, the Parish Pauper.

"I joined her and took my accustomed seat on a sort of horse-block."—*Page* 17.

MY PARISH;

OR,

"The Country Parson's" Visits to his Poor.

BY

REV. BARTON BOUCHIER, A.M.

The years revolve—and I again explore
The simple annals of my village poor.
CRABBE.

LONDON:
JOHN FARQUHAR SHAW,
27, SOUTHAMPTON ROW, AND 36, PATERNOSTER ROW.
1856.

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BODLEIANA

These Tales,

MEMORIALS OF BY-GONE YEARS,

ARE INSCRIBED

TO ONE

WHO, AS SHE RETRACES THE SCENES THEY DESCRIBE,

WILL RECALL MANY AN INCIDENT

OF EARLIER LIFE,

WHEN SIDE BY SIDE AND HAND IN HAND SHE WALKED

IN ALL AFFECTIONATE AND EARNEST FELLOWSHIP

WITH THE WRITER.

THE COTTAGE,
CHEAM, SURREY.

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INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER.

I HAVE often thought that a large harvest of practical as well as spiritual utility might be gathered in, if every labourer in the vineyard, however circumscribed his sphere, would keep a faithful record of those events within his own walk which his judgment deems most interesting, and most calculated to develop and reveal the hidden workings of grace, as well as "the unsearchable riches" of Christ.

If, in detailing the natural history of Selborne, Gilbert White has materially added to our information, and been the pioneer of many a succeeding gleaner in the fields of entertaining and instructive knowledge,—if he has described with the precision and minuteness of an eye-witness the habits and instincts of GOD'S lower creatures, has sketched the scenery of nature with the pen of fidelity and taste, and has thus invested his native village with an interest which will never decay, and given to it "a local habitation and a name" in memory's records—surely the lowly annalist of the poor, who describes the workings of spiritual life, and "the rise and progress of religion" in the

soul, may well hope to excite a feeling beyond the mere interest of his tale. If the meditative and reflecting Christian, as he walks abroad in the fields or scales the mountain's side, as he roams through the wooded glen or wanders by the bank of a babbling stream, can find a thousand incidents to arouse his imagination and deepen his adoration of the Creator's wonders, even in the gossamer that floats in the air, the insect that whirrs on his ear, or the tiny ant that works its mazy chambers in the earth,—it is no disparagement to the labours of the naturalist to say, that he whose steps direct him to the chambers of sickness or the beds of death, whose disposition or whose duty leads him to explore the unsearchable riches of GOD'S grace in the human heart,—who prefers holding converse with unlettered but docile ignorance, or lowly but ripened faith, in the cottage or the field, is at least as likely to find traces of an Almighty hand, and far more sure to awaken in his own mind sources of deep and absorbing interest, as far surpassing the researches of the naturalist as the human soul is in value above the insect of an hour.

Let it not however be supposed that it is intended to depreciate or decry these inquiries. No one who traces with a pious spirit the instincts, habits, and fitness to their several ends, of the animal creation, can for a moment doubt that the same Power which "meted out the heavens with a span, and

measured the waters in the hollow of His hand," is equally discernible in His attributes of beneficence and mercy, and wonderful adaptation, in the minutest details even of insect formation. And assuredly, no minister of Christ, who loves to watch his Master's dealings, to trace the hidden sources of His goodness, and to summon all nature, as it were, to join him in praise to Him "whose mercies are over all His works," would ever exclude himself from those means of grace which the volume of nature affords. I believe, if ever there were patient and admiring investigators of GOD'S works in nature, if ever there were men who tinted every aspect of rural life and imagery with the holiest reflections of a sanctified spirit, and who imprinted on every object that met them by mountain-side, or amid the valleys of Palestine or the hills of Galilee, the reflex of their own holy feelings, they were the writers of the sacred Scriptures; and so lasting as well as vivid the impression, that it abides even to this day: and one can hardly recall or meet with an object in nature, "from the cedar in Lebanon to the hyssop that springeth out of the wall," that is not associated with some spiritual reflection awakened by these holy writers.

As, for instance, he sees the ox answering to its owner's call, he recalls the contrast of the stiff-necked house of Judah; as he views the lambs playing in the meadows, he remembers his Saviour's injunction to feed his lambs, and he carries his thoughts onwards

to that tender Shepherd who "gathers the lambs with his arm, and carries them in his bosom," whose promise is to "lead them forth into green pastures and beside the still waters;" and he longs for that predicted period, when there shall be one fold under one Shepherd. As the ant, too, pursues its busy work, he remembers the sluggard's warning, and prays that he may be equally diligent in laying up his stores where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, nor thieves break through and steal. Even the worm that crawls along his path reminds him of that lowly Saviour, who disdained not to compare himself, in His state of humiliation, to the lowest reptile which His own hand had formed, "a worm and no man,"—humble, silent, innocent, overlooked, oppressed, and trodden under foot. When, too, in the spring-time he hears the song of birds, and watches with curious eye their unceasing labours in constructing their tiny homes, their patient incubation, and unwearied care of their young, he remembers that the birds of the air had their nests, but that Jesus had not where to lay His head; when again he beholds the wild flower waving in the breeze, or scents its rich perfume in the air, he acknowledges whose hand has so clothed the grass of the field, and so beautifully dyed with His own rainbow-tints even the fading flower.

But, however ample the naturalist's subject, or excursive his theme, it comes not so "home to the business and bosom" of human nature as the

investigation of the heart of man in its various stages of existence, or its phases of grace. If, indeed, there be much that is humiliating, there is much also that is consolatory; and even in the most distressing scenes of degradation, the spirit of a Christian minister can find much to teach himself, and keep in continual exercise those graces of love, charity, forbearance, and intercession, which are among the most valued privileges of his walk. In one respect, indeed, the naturalist may seem to have the advantage. He pursues his theme amid the sunny fields, or the calmer quietude of lettered ease; and like the insect whose habits he may be investigating, if unsuccessful in one attempt, he can unconcernedly resume a second, without a desponding thought on previous failures. He may see life after life perish beneath his hand, ere he establish one truth.

The errand of the village pastor, on the contrary, is to scenes of misery and wretchedness; wherever sorrow enters, he follows in its train; wherever want abounds, his step is sure to tread: the cries and groans of pain and remorse are the sounds that meet his ear; and the last struggles of departing nature, the throes he has to soothe. And with what intensity of feeling, with what agony of suspense, with what earnestness of heart and soul he pursues his aim, let those who have knelt by the bedside of a dying sinner declare! Is it a light thing to him that his efforts fail, that his voice is oft-times choked with

tears, and that he too often sees life ebbing away without that confession and that reception into the heart of a Saviour, who alone is mighty to save, or with those confused and perplexed views which dim and almost quench the dying hope? Yet it is not always so; and even though his steps may lead him to the poorest hovel of existence, though want, and pinching penury, and pain, and privation, such as affluence never dreamed of, meet his eye in the miserable abodes he enters, faith has shed a gleam around, which has brightened every spot. And though, it may be, his errand has been poured into the deadened ear of decrepitude and age, angels, though unseen, have hovered around the bed, and Jesus himself been nigh to whisper peace to the bowed and contrite spirit.

It may be said that the annals of the poor present not so wide a range for interest and instruction as a more extended survey of human life would afford, and there is some truth in the remark; but at the time when the following sketches were first taken, the writer of these tales had but few opportunities of witnessing the growth of grace amid the impediments of wealth and the hindrances of prosperity. His lot for many of the earlier years of his ministerial life was altogether cast among a lowly and a rural people, almost the unlettered ones of Christ's flock, and to them alone was his message delivered. But it may not be uninteresting, it cannot be uninstructive, to trace even among such the signs and symptoms of

spiritual life, and to witness, in many an instance, that rapid growth which proves a vegetative power far beyond all that man's appliances could produce.

It is, if I may so term it, one of the many compensatory appointments of Providence, that if there be not quickness of comprehension, there is, at least, tenacity of grasp: to use an image drawn from their own pursuits, though the seed may be tardy in showing signs of vegetation and putting forth its germ, yet when once it begins to shoot, it grows up with a rapidity which plainly evidences whence it derives its nourishment, even from those holy influences which distil as the small rain upon the herb, and the tender dew upon the grass; and that as it is "rooted in Christ," so is it watered by the Holy Ghost.

There may be, indeed, much discouragement in the first approaches to a poor man's conscience—to his heart there is none; a kind word, an anxious inquiry after his own welfare and that of those dear to him, an unostentatious call at his cottage in seasons of health as well as of sickness, an earnest and evident interest in his well-being, and a readiness to counsel and befriend in times of need, will always find the way to his heart and confidence. But the moment that the inquiry after his temporal welfare is exchanged for the all-important one respecting his soul, he seems at once to put himself into an attitude of self-defence; the kindliness of his aspect becomes clouded, and he at once wraps himself up in the almost impenetrable

covering of dullness and hardness of heart. His knowledge is bounded by a few simple phrases of unmeaning admission; his whole vocabulary seems confined to "Ye-e-s"—"I suppose it be true"—"I ai n't no scholar;" and even these are extorted with such reluctance that one is almost inclined to question whether it be dullness, indifference, or contempt. But beneath this discouraging exterior there is a soil in which the seed, once faithfully sown, will begin to vegetate; and when it has once taken firm hold and root, will spring up with a rapidity of growth to reward every labour and care bestowed upon the culture.

It might, perhaps, be added, that at the period to which these tales refer education was comparatively in its infancy; certainly, as far as the grown-up and the aged generation were concerned, it had had little influence on them. I am not inclined, however, to lay much stress upon this point; for though I believe that there is an immensely increased number of the educated classes throughout the country, yet, unhappily, education has not done its work among the agricultural portion of the community, and we find at this day among them as many ignorant and unlettered as in the earlier days of which I write. It would be, however, leading myself and my readers into far too wide a field to discuss this question as its importance requires; but the problem is yet to be worked out, how education can effectively be brought to bear upon our rural population.

MY PARISH.

MARY HOW.

"She was naebody's bairn, she was naebody's bairn,
She had mickle to thole, she had mickle to learn,
Afore a kind word or a kind look she could earn;
For naebody cared about naebody's bairn."

Ballantine's Poems.

I HAVE just returned from committing to the grave the last remains of poor MARY HOW; and while the impressions are yet vivid on my mind, I wish to note down a few circumstances connected with this poor apparent outcast of human life. I have attended some few gorgeous obsequies, where outward pomp would fain have compensated for inward feeling. And I have once seen the mouldering remains of royalty conveyed to their kindred dust amid marshalled troops and gleaming torches, and followed by hosts of princes

and nobles in all the array of real or seeming woe, while the loud boom of the minute gun and the solemn swell of music stole mournfully over the ear. But I have never been so struck with the vanity of human life, as when committing this hapless pauper to the grave. At such an hour, it is true, all distinctions are levelled, and the monarch is as much the prey of the worm and the spoiler as the meanest slave who has dragged out a miserable existence. But, to look at it merely in an earthly point of view, the former has, at least, run his course of splendour, and, it may be, of utility also; life has had for him its charms and its noble opportunities of good; and when we consign him to the grave, though we may sigh over the frail tenure of earthly grandeur, we yet feel that he has had his good things in life, and that he is but sharing the common doom of our fallen nature.

The case, however, of the parish pauper is far otherwise—a life of indigence and toil is generally succeeded by a death of wretchedness; the pangs of sickness are seldom alleviated by the kind accents of sympathy or affection, and the last breath is scarcely departed from the body ere it is consigned to the mercenary hands of unfeeling indifference, and a few misshapen boards become the unsightly tenement of a being who, in infancy and childhood, had never known the artless gambols of life's least sorrowing season, but whose every feeling and instinct had been

quenched by the rude hand of discipline and severity, —who in earliest boy or girl-hood has been sent forth to earn a miserable livelihood by the hardest and most unpitied servitude, in which "no touch of kindness," no look of love, ever brightened the scene, and who has perhaps fled from its cheerless miseries, and sought, alas! shelter in the still sadder hardships, privations, and labours of a married life; and again, perhaps, after life's long round, returns in old age and worn-out decrepitude to the same poor dreary walls, and the same heartless routine of weight and measure, and scale and balance, which so pinched and stunted the growth of their early years, and which holds out no hope of change, till the grave summons to its welcome shelter.

In the present instance my feelings were powerfully awakened; and as I stood over the grave of this friendless pauper, committing all that remained of earth to its parent dust, and the spirit to GOD who gave it, I could not help acknowledging that, were it not for the hope in Jesus, this woman had been of all persons the "most miserable;" having that hope, she was rich indeed in a future world. But this life had been to her such a blank, such a destitution and bereavement of all the wonted charities of life, that she seemed "like an ocean-weed up-torn" and left to float upon the waters at the mercy of wind and wave.

I will, however, sketch her brief history, if a blank in the page of life can be termed a history. This

poor creature was a destitute being even from her mother's womb. Begotten, most probably, in sin, she was exposed shortly after birth to the casual mercy of any stranger, by the unnatural neglect of a mother. "*Can* a mother forget her sucking child?" asked the prophet of Judah. "Yea! even a mother may forget"—and so it proved in the present instance. This outcast from the birth found no Pharaoh's daughter to protect and support her, but was consigned, as soon as found, to the tender mercies of a village workhouse—that workhouse which was her only earthly home, which bounded all her hopes and joys, if she had any, her fears and sorrows, which received her as an outcast orphan of a few days old, and retained her within its walls till she was carried forth to her last home. It is needless to say that a mother's love never watched over the infancy of this helpless babe—a father's blessing never sounded in her ears, nor thrilled upon her heart. *How* she came to be thus exposed was the nine days' wonder of the village, and the very inquiry, "How it was," contributed to attach to her an appropriate name, so that under the designation of MARY HOW this orphan babe was registered among the children of GOD. This had happened long before I became the minister of the parish, and of course I could only acquire my information by still-surviving rumour. The mystery was never thoroughly solved, I believe, though many suspicions were engendered, which might come near

the truth, but which it is of no importance to my story to detail. The child grew—but disregarded by all, and ill-used by some, it was more a matter of pity than astonishment that her frame showed no proofs of maternal tenderness or care, and that, in fact, the orphan babe grew up a deformed and stunted dwarf. To those who viewed her only as a child of earth, could any situation seem more desolate than this of the poor parish pauper? without one single being who felt the slightest interest for her, without one earthly object around which to entwine her youthful affections, life and all its ties might be said to have been a blank indeed.

Yet it was far otherwise; GOD, who so mercifully "tempers the wind to the shorn lamb," or protects the lamb against the wind, had His own gracious purposes and views with regard to this lone and lowly one of His flock. As she grew up, a sense of her forlorn and destitute condition communicated a mildness to her disposition which few could resist; and the uncomplaining submission with which she bore the hardships and privations of her lot gained the pity, if not the admiration, of most, and many were the kind words and looks of soothing sympathy which began to greet the friendless child.

I believe the Lord has always, ready provided, some kind Samaritan, journeying as if by chance on the very road where the wounded traveller lies, and who arrives just at the very moment when his "oil

and wine" are so especially needed. I believe, too, that the Lord, in the workings of that Providence which is over all His works, and which suffereth not a sparrow nor a hedgeling to fall to the ground unpermitted of Him, whenever He has a bruised and torn one of His flock needing a tenderer hand than usual to nurture and to heal it, has that hand ready to be stretched out to help—has one close at hand to supply the want—one whose own heart has been, perhaps, touched and prepared by sorrow for the especial work of sympathy with another torn and sorrowing one of the family. We are apt to say of such apparently accidental circumstances, "How very fortunate!" but faith lifts up the curtain and sees GOD'S hand at work, and cries out, "It is of the Lord's mercies."

It was so with MARY HOW: at the very period when the child and the girl were merging into youth, when all the feelings, instincts, impressions, desires, and longings of the heart were so pliant and so easily moulded into good or evil, when the tone, and the look only, of kindness are so winning, especially to one who had known but few of either, there was a widow lady residing in the village, whose only daughter, a child of about the same age as the poor orphan, had been taken from her by rapid and fatal illness, and whose affections seemed to pine for some object on which she could bestow some of that love and kindness which her own child had hitherto ab-

sorbed. She soon found out MARY HOW, and would have her to her own house two or three times a week to teach—and to win to Jesus. Mrs. Webb, the lady in question, was of a truly Christian spirit—one who had long known and loved the truth as it is in Jesus, and who yet blended with all her zeal and earnestness the most correct judgment and discrimination. Though she never wearied in her labours of love to the poor outcast, and soon became really attached to her mild and clinging disposition, she never forgot the condition in which she was, and in which in all human probability she would remain, nor, under the semblance of kindness and sympathy though in reality to gratify her own immediate feelings, made her dissatisfied with her lot, by imparting instruction at variance with and above her station. Mrs. Webb had no intention of adopting MARY as her own child; such a thought had probably never entered her mind, nor indeed would the poor orphan have either graced or been happy in such a lot. But she most earnestly desired to secure for her a far "better place and name than of sons and daughters," even an inheritance with Him "who gathereth the outcasts," and who, when father and mother forsake, is ready to take up the deserted ones, and give them a place in His own family, and among His own children. And I believe this Christian lady (long since gone to her rest, and whose name was so often in after-years repeated to me with such tenacious

and grateful love by the orphan child, herself then an aged woman) was the human instrument in the Lord's hands, quietly and unobtrusively, and unmarked by human eye, to compensate to this poor shorn lamb of His flock for the unkindness, neglect, and apathy of a selfish and unfeeling world. People said at the time, "How very kind of Mrs. Webb to take notice of such a workhouse brat!" some wondered, and some sneered at her condescension, just as their tempers might be; and if they did not altogether predict harm from her instructions, at least anticipated no good. MARY, however, still kept growing up, the same quiet, meek, docile child she had ever been; and as her kind benefactress in the course of two or three years removed from the village to a far distant home in another land with an emigrant son, poor MARY was soon handed back to her own resources. But the ground was prepared, the seed had been sown, and had taken root, and soon began to grow, people knew not how: and it was not an infrequent remark, even among those who would have scorned to feel an interest in a parish pauper, that there was that in her demeanour and her look which betokened something far beyond the coarse and rugged training of her workhouse-home.

These were, however, no outpourings of overflowing joy, no ebullition of enthusiastic feeling: all was calm, and quiet, and unobtrusive; and perhaps none but the kind inquirer, or the spiritual adviser, would

have discovered any evidence beyond the "charity that suffereth long and is kind," and the meekness which never "spoke unadvisedly with lips" of that hope and experience which grace had assuredly wrought in her. She was indeed one of those secret ones, whose "life was hid with Christ in GOD," and whose path the Lord alone knew. So completely severed as she now was, by the removal of her benefactress, from all communion or sympathy on earth, she learned to hold secret converse with her GOD and her own heart; and many, no doubt, were those holy communings which the world never knew, and with which no stranger intermeddled.

At the period when I came to reside in the village, infancy and youth had already passed away, and "grey hairs," perhaps somewhat prematurely, "were here and there upon her." The infirmities of her frame had disabled her from seeking a livelihood in service, and she was still an inhabitant of that home which had sheltered her infant years. She did what she could; and He, who so mercifully condescended to approve the same service in another, no doubt accepted and graciously smiled upon her humble labour of love.

In one respect her aid was often in requisition, and never denied, and never inefficient. At first indeed it was in obedience to the commands of those in whose charge she was, that she should attend by the bed-sides of those who were ill and suffering,

and, though so apparently helpless herself, administer help to those who needed it, even more than she did herself. It was, no doubt, thought that she might in this way in some degree repay her livelihood, and at any rate it saved the wages of another. But a result occurred little contemplated, and perhaps little cared for. At first, timid and nervous in offering even those services which were demanded of her, there was yet something so gentle in her manner, so anxious in her look, so tender in her touch, and so noiseless in her tread, that even pain seemed lulled when she administered to it, and anguish lessened when her hand applied the remedy. Opportunities, too, continually occurred in which she could utter a word in season; and, though at first her remarks were merely deprecatory, to still complaint and hush the unthankful murmur, she soon learned to speak of Him, the Friend of sinners, and in her own artless language to tell of His undying love. The tones too of her voice were simply sweet, and so unlike that dull and dreary twang which even now too often marks the village-teaching, and which is so seldom forgotten in after years. Thanks to her kind instructress, MARY had learned to read with sense and with feeling—two accompaniments which are seldom taken into much account. If the words are correctly read and pronounced, the sense is a secondary consideration, and left to be picked up as it may: and of course it naturally follows, that if a child does not understand,

neither can he feel, what he reads. And even though the meaning be understood, yet unless the heart be thrown into the expression it seldom hits the mark. It is true of reading as the ancient poet said of acting, "If you wish me to cry, you must yourself cry first." And I have heard many an illiterate man say to me, "Why, sir, the Bible be quite a different sort of book, when you read it to me; my wife (or child, as the case may be) be a capital scholar, but somehow, when she reads it to me, it do n't lift me up, and make one feel all over like." And as MARY occasionally read a chapter in the Bible, or recited one of her favourite hymns, the eye of the suffering patient would be fixed upon her with the deepest attention, and the heart led to anxious inquiry how one so apparently an outcast could speak of peace and joy in such assured terms.

Her character as a nurse soon became established. Seldom was there a sick chamber of which MARY HOW was not also the inmate. If an accident occurred, the messenger who fetched the doctor summoned MARY HOW as well; and it was really wonderful how a creature, so frail and infirm herself, could yet perform offices of tenderness from which many a sturdier frame would have shrunk. Her character too as a messenger of peace seemed to be more thoroughly understood and appreciated; and when she spoke, in her favourite text, "of the land that is afar off," where no inhabitant shall say, "I am sick,"

and of Him who is the Way to that land, there was a tremulous earnestness in her tones, that told the heart was in every accent, and that she herself felt and knew the truth of every word she uttered. It might have been indeed said of this poor diminutive and desolate one, as was said of one before her, that "her presence was weak, and her speech contemptible," but many a heart, I verily believe, did the Lord open to attend unto the things spoken by her.

Our own times and the exigencies of our own circumstances have called forth many Mary Hows—not indeed from the purlieus of village workhouses or parochial unions, but from lordly halls and affluent homes. The tender and delicate woman, of whom one might have said in the words of Scripture, that "for very delicateness and tenderness she would hardly adventure to set the sole of her foot upon the ground," has gone nobly forth to brave the dangers of wintry seas, and endure the horrors of military hospitals, in order to mitigate the amount of human suffering, and cheer the dying moments of the soldier and the sailor. Talk of "the divinity that doth hedge a king," it sinks into nothing before that shield and panoply which maiden purity throws around herself, when Christian love is found to tread where even duty had failed to climb! And such an one in her humble sphere was Mary How in her day; and the same God of love, who has blessed the world-wide deeds of the one in the hospitals of Scu-

tari and Balaclava, no doubt accepted and recorded the acts of love that were equally shown for His name's sake, in the lowlier rounds of a village district.

I would just mention one anecdote, as sweetly illustrative of her manner of gentle rebuke, and dealing with Scripture truth. There was a poor woman in the village, about her own age, whom of course she had long known, probably even from childhood, but who, unlike herself, had never known, had never sought for, the consolations of religion—always intending, but never having resolution, to begin the new course of life she was continually projecting;—one who I believe really wished to do well, but suffered every excuse, every engagement, every care, and even every pleasure, to interfere with her intended change of conduct; one who, in her own expressive phraseology, "muddled away" the Sabbath-day, and scarcely ever, from January to December, was seen within the walls of the house of GOD. I believe that every Sunday she made a resolution that it should be the last time of absence, and fully meant to abide by her resolve, till the next came round, and then either her bonnet was untidy, or her shawl torn, or a friend dropped in, or some of those numberless excuses which, in every grade of life, stand the test of the moment, and no longer. Poor MARY HOW had often remonstrated and reasoned with her, though in vain; and one Monday morning, passing by Betty Tur-

land's door, who, as usual, had not been to church on the preceding day, and seeing her quietly seated in her old nook of the chimney-corner, went in, and, taking her station by her side, after a few preliminary remarks, said in her usual mild tone, "Ah! Mrs. Turland, when will you find out that one day in the courts of the Lord's house is better than a thousand elsewhere?"

"Why then, MARY, to be sure it 's a blessed thing to go to church, and I hope I shall find it so; but somehow things go so cross, I am always put out when I mean to go. Only yesterday as ever was I was a-going, and when I came to look at my shoes, they were so bad, I could n't abide going in them. Why, the neighbours would all have jeered at me finely. But I 'll get Master Reed to mend them against next Sunday."

"It was indeed a great pity," quietly replied MARY; "but I never read, Mrs. Turland, in GOD'S blessed book, that shoes were necessary to come into the presence of the Lord with. I never read that rags and tatters, or even filthy garments, were necessarily a hindrance; but I have read of one who had no shoes to his feet, when he came into his father's presence, but was not on that account spurned and bidden to go away. I will tell you the story. He had foolishly gone from his father's house, to seek his own pleasure in riotous living; and having spent all that he had, became so reduced that he was glad

to eat of the very husks which the swine did eat. And it was in this extremity that, hungering and naked, and perhaps with torn and bleeding feet, he retraced his weary steps to his father's home, and perhaps, like you, he thought that he might be jeered at by the servants, if not repulsed by his father. But he had no alternative—he must perish or go on —and so he went on."

"Well, MARY, and what became of it? it 's a very pretty story indeed."

"I will read it you, Mrs. Turland, from GOD's own book, as uttered by the blessed Jesus himself"—and here she took her little Bible from her pocket, and, turning to the chapter, read—

"And when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion on him, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him." And so far from allowing the servants to scorn his repentant son, he desired them to "bring forth the best robe and put it on him, and a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet." Ah! Mrs. Turland, continued MARY, "GOD is the Father represented, and you and I are the poor prodigals; and as sure as ever *he* was received in love, so shall we, if we come in the same spirit. It is not dress He looks at, but the heart. It would have been a sad thing for that poor prodigal to have waited till he had found some one to give him new clothes and shoes, before he set out on his journey home. And I should like to know where he would have

found any one willing to give him them in that time of famine, when they would not even give him food to eat. He would have died in his misery; and so shall we, if we do not, like him, at once arise and go to our Father. You may depend upon it, he was happy and grateful enough when once more safe under his father's roof."

I do not know what immediate impression this conversation made, but I know that in my own days Betty Turland was a regular attendant on Divine worship, as well as a devout communicant at the Lord's Table; and we may therefore suppose that, as in the case of Lydia, the Lord opened her heart to attend to the things that had been spoken.

Yet poor MARY'S career of active usefulness did not last long; her own frame, so feeble and disorganized, speedily gave way beneath the exhaustion of sleepless nights and almost imprisoned days, and she was after a few years reduced to the necessity of surrendering her occupation altogether. She seemed to be aware that she was not destined for a long life, and that her vital powers were not knit together with the strength of other frames; and her whole life evinced one calm and placid preparation for her change. Yet there was no apparent illness, no suffering—or rather none of which she chose to tell. Decay stole softly, yet surely, over her frame, and to the last she still kept up. I think I can see her now, as she stood but a few days before her death

basking in the warm sunbeams at the end of the workhouse, her back resting against the wall, with her knitting in her hands, and, as usual, with a smile of contentment on her lips.

I joined her, as was often my wont to do on the same spot; and taking my accustomed seat on a sort of horse-block, formed out of the roots and trunk of an old elm tree, which had been cut down, said,

"Well, MARY, still basking in GOD'S sunbeams! Yon glorious sun shines alike on rich and poor—the inmate of a workhouse, as well as the tenant of a palace. Like its mighty Creator, it knows no distinction of persons. 'The poor in the dust, and the beggar on the dunghill,' are alike warmed by its rays."

"Ah, sir, that 's a precious truth to poor folk."

"It is indeed, MARY; and though I do not think that you will live to sit among princes, or inherit an earthly throne of glory, yet the promise, I believe, equally belongs to you, and GOD intended you to take the comfort of it."

"I know, sir, I am poor—among the very poorest; and if to live on parish-pay be beggary, GOD knows I have lived on little else since I was born."

"And yet, MARY," I replied, "it is not to be poor alone that brings down GOD'S blessing on us,—we must be beggars also; and it is because I know you to be the one, and believe you to be the other also, that I think the promise extends to you."

"Ah, sir," said MARY, with her placid smile, "I now catch your meaning. I was thinking of this world's poverty alone, not of that in which we all share alike."

"You plead guilty, then, to being a beggar?"

"I plead guilty, sir, to having never begged enough; far too feebly, far too faintly, I have sometimes thought, ever to be heard."

"It might be so, MARY, if our voice had to pierce yonder sky, and in its human accents reach the throne of grace; but the feeblest moan, though unheard by others, is heard by Him. And you remember how the Psalmist calls on GOD to 'bow down His ear, and hear,' as a mother bends over the face of her child to catch its faintest whisper, or as you yourself have no doubt often bowed your own ear to listen to the scarcely-uttered want of some sick one you were nursing. And why is this? Is it not, that not only in all the afflictions of His people is He himself afflicted, but that He himself apportions every step of their way; and when they pass through the waters or the fires, or even the dark valley of the shadow of death, His promise still is, 'I will be with thee.'"

"GOD is indeed gracious to His poor creatures," she replied: "and what abundant mercies has He given to me, the poorest of all!"

"Yes, MARY, many a one of the gay and the thoughtless, as they passed by you in their pride, or thought

only of your earthly history, might speak of you as one 'having nothing.' Which of them, as they saw you with your enfeebled frame and shortened breath, would think of adding, 'and yet possessing all things'? Aye, that's a precious text, MARY, for the Lord's impoverished ones to store up in the choicest corner of their hearts, 'All things are yours; for ye are Christ's, and Christ is GOD's.' Oh! what a glorious lot is the beggar's portion, then! Keep, MARY, to your 'dunghill' to the very last. Lie low in the dust, till GOD exalt you. It is the only posture from which to mount on eagle-wings."

"I am sure," was her reply, "that now at the close —and the close is drawing very nigh—I can truly say, that I look upon it as one of the Lord's best mercies that He has placed me low, and kept me low: and if ever I have been tempted to murmur that I have no one on earth to love or to love me, I have always thought of the text, 'He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me.' And is it not, sir, a mercy that no human ties have been given to me, to draw me aside from loving Him? And yet there have been times without number, when I have longed to know my father and mother. I think they must have often thought of me, and perhaps sorrowed for me, and for their desertion of me: and I have scarcely ever ceased to pray for them that they may be forgiven, and that we may meet in heaven. Do you think, sir," she

tremulously asked, "do you think I shall meet my father and mother there?" and the tears rolled down her cheeks, as she asked the question.

It was difficult to refrain from mingling my own tears with hers, as she spoke and looked so beseechingly in my face, and I said hurriedly,

"No doubt, no doubt, MARY; for GOD will be all in all—father and mother, and brother and sister, and all."

There was perhaps a momentary look of disappointment when she heard my words, but it almost immediately passed away, and, looking upwards, she said,

"Even so, come, Lord Jesus!"

I could not help responding in the text which bore so completely on her case, and I said with much earnestness, "Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken from her." Her eye rested for a moment on mine, as she heard the gracious promise, and then glanced upwards with that expression of grateful hope which faith alone can give, as I parted from her with a fervent prayer that the blessings of the covenant might be realized to her in Christ Jesus.

I did not think I should see her no more on this side the grave, but so it was. In two or three days after the interview just narrated, her complaint—water on the chest, I believe—carried her off suddenly, in the usual acceptation of the word, but not unpre-

paredly to one who waited and looked in every watch for her Lord's coming.

She was, of course, buried by the parish; and parochial funerals certainly do not tend to lessen the bitterness of death. A coffin was provided, and in its narrow, scanty space rested the earthly tabernacle of the parish pauper. I can hardly even say that any *mourner* attended her remains to the grave. Poor Betty Turland had gone before her; and two or three women, with some faded mourning raked out for the occasion, followed the corpse, and that was all. Several children were congregated, in a spirit of holiday glee, at the churchyard gate and around the grave; and though every lip was hushed when the solemn words, "I am the Resurrection and the Life," sounded in their ears, still it was too evident that there was a listless apathy as regarded the deceased, and that in fact the parish pauper was beginning to be forgotten even before she had entered her grave. Yet I know not if I was ever more deeply affected myself, or that I ever read our beautiful and touching Burial Service with more soul-awakened feeling. It was not that I was deeply interested in the loss of the individual, or that I in any degree bewailed her death; for she slept, I knew, in Jesus. I knew she had committed her soul to the Saviour's keeping; and I knew, too, with the Apostle, that "He was able to keep that which she had committed unto Him against that day." But, still,

I never felt the utter insignificance of human life and its perishing baubles so powerfully, or the utter worthlessness of all this world could give, compared to that saving interest in a crucified Redeemer, which alone can give peace at the last, so consolingly, as when I heard the clods rattle on the coffin-lid of poor

Mary How.

GEORGE ELLIOTT.

"I have remembrance of a Boy, whose mind
Was weak—he seemed not for the world designed,
Seemed not as one who in that world could thrive."
Crabbe.

THERE are very few parishes in England, however scanty in population, which have not one of these melancholy, but still interesting, objects, an IDIOT, in their number. I say, interesting, in its truest and noblest sense,—not the interest which captivates the eye, or wins upon the senses, but that which enlists the best feelings of our hearts, awakens our sympathies, excites our humility, and demands our faith. Though there may be superstition in the feeling which leads the nations of the East to regard such objects with reverence, as the peculiar favourites of Heaven, there is something so amiable in the sentiment, and so protecting in its results to these unhappy outcasts, that, though reason may condemn,

humanity will applaud. And those who bear the Christian name may blush to think of the treatment, the scoff and the jest, to which in a gospel land such beings are too often exposed. For my own part, I trust that I am not singular in the feeling, which, though it leads me not to invest these hapless creatures with attributes to which I am conscious they have no pretensions, still ever causes me to look upon them with the strongest emotions of pity—and yet of admiration—pity at their apparently destitute condition, their privation of the usual solaces of life, and their loss of those ennobling hopes which dignify creatures of immortality,—and yet of admiration at that compensating mercy of Providence, which deals out to them joys and pleasures, with which a stranger intermeddleth not, and which leads them by a way we know not to that peace, to which their more gifted brothers and sisters are too often, unhappily, strangers. They have, no doubt, at times, their sorrows, but they are, like the sorrows of childhood, soon brushed away and forgotten in the next moment; and if they have not the wonted solaces, they are at least free from the depressing cares and anxieties which too often darken the sunshine of life; and if they have not the resources of intellect, they are spared from the responsibility of wasted or perverted talent.

It is in fact this, which I have termed "the compensating mercy of Providence," which forms, in my

estimation, the peculiar interest attached to these lone ones of Christ's flock; and while humility and gratitude excite the fervent thanksgiving for the still continued privilege of reason to oneself, faith carries her ascending thoughts onwards and upwards beyond this world, and sees the blessed Jesus bearing His wounded ones in His arms, and leading them by sure paths to those pastures where the veil shall be removed, and the unerring vision behold Him as He is.

> "Oh! what a burst of mind shall flow
> When, disencumbered from this clod,
> Thou, who on earth couldst nothing know,
> Shalt rise to comprehend thy GOD!"

I never see an idiot but these lines almost spontaneously rise to my memory, I feel my heart respond and glow at the sublime idea embodied in them, and as I pour them forth in the full fervour of holy feeling, I am sensible that charity is enlarged and faith invigorated; and the apparently helpless and destitute being, who seems thrown among its fellow-creatures, as among them, but not of them, forms a strong and undoubted link in that chain of mysterious love which unites all GOD'S works to Him, as the loving centre and source of all.

Some years ago that dreadful scourge of human nature, the typhus fever, was, by GOD'S will, permitted to rage with peculiar virulence in our little community. It was a time of much distress and suffering, and, as is often the case in seasons of in-

fectious disease, was marked by some few instances of devotedness of feeling, and many more of painful abandonment of the claims of duty, and even the ties of affection. Poor Mary How, whose story precedes this, was a host in herself in this time of trial; her poor, attenuated, feeble frame was seen flitting from bedside to bedside, and many a young one would take from her hands the medicine from which they would turn aside if offered by another. There were indeed those who said that Mary did no more than she ought to do; and in one sense they were quite right: and it was this strong motive of duty that influenced the poor orphan-nurse in all her labours of love, and bore her up above all the fears of disease and risks of infection. But when they went on to add that the Parish-Pauper was the Parish-Slave, they claimed a power no law could give; and when they added too, that if she were taken away, she had none to miss and mourn her, they said what was most untrue, and what almost every heart and every voice in the parish would have been lifted up to deny. Not miss her? why every sick and suffering one would have missed her; every chamber of sickness would have missed her quiet tread, that never made a noise; every frame that was racked with pain would have missed her gentle hand, that seemed to smooth the pillow with a tenderness that none else could reach. And, more than that, all, whether in sickness or in health, in sorrow or in joy, would

have missed that well-known Bible which Mary ever carried with her, and that soft voice which read so sweetly from its pages GOD'S own precious promises and truths. We had all much reason to bless and thank GOD, that Mary How was not numbered among the victims of the fever.

Some few indeed were taken from us in the prime of life and usefulness; but it was among the young and tender ones of the flock that the disease seemed to rage with the greatest severity. Many of them, after a few days' suffering, sunk beneath the assault; and of those whom death spared, it was melancholy to witness the prostration of energy, the protracted absence of physical strength, and the slow and almost imperceptible return of reason to their shattered minds. It was the strong man armed putting forth his full violence against the tender and unresisting frames of infancy and childhood. In one or two instances the light of reason never again dawned, and the child, whose playful glee and artless prattle had often soothed a mother's aching heart, or delighted a wearied father on his return from daily toil, now only caused hopeless, helpless anguish, by its vacant look or unmeaning chatter. It was indeed a time of sore trial of faith, and many a repining murmur; I fear, many a questioning of GOD'S providence arose in the mourner's heart, and added the bitterness of impatience to the already severe infliction.

But, like every trial of Him who doth not afflict

willingly, nor grieve the children of men, it was at length sanctified and overruled to our good. By degrees the disorder wore out its violence, fear became less predominant, long association with danger braced the nerves against its inroads; the paralysed insensibility with which its assaults were submitted to in the first burst of the disease gradually subsided; and, a Christian minister must add, the higher tone of religious feeling, the more prevailing reference to prayer and supplication, the visible and audible acknowledgments of Almighty power, which, with right instruction, ever follow in the wake of GOD'S judgments, at length prevailed to stay the plague, and our little village once more assumed the healthful aspect of calmer times. The lesson that had been read was not however soon forgotten in returning safety; and as mothers once more folded in fond and safe endearment their children in their arms, they still remembered and praised the mercy which had spared them.

Our Sunday-School resumed its labours. During the prevalence of the disease, prudence had suggested the propriety of discontinuing our meetings, and indeed our little ranks had offered the most numerous victims to the fever. It was saddening on our first meeting to have its ravages brought so distinctly to our notice; many a little one, whose infant tongue had lisped of Jesus, was no more among us; and of some, too, whose growth in grace had given bright and pleasing hopes, we could see the little resting-

places in the church-yard from the school-room window. On the first Sabbath-day of our reöpening, but little was learned in the usual routine; the books indeed were opened, and the eyes wandered over the pages, but the heart recurred to the recollection of loved companions and playmates now no more; and it was felt that perhaps a more useful and impressive lesson could be given by a few simple remarks, and touching reference to the past.

There was, however, one circumstance which gave a peculiar and melancholy interest to the scene. A little boy, who had been one of our best scholars,—a regular and delighted attendant in his class, and who, in fact, from his superior quickness rather than his years, was himself a teacher,—once more appeared with the rest in his class-place. But, poor boy! his reason had sunk beneath the shock of disease, and, though instinct and habit reässumed the busy look and half-important air, it was well known that GEORGE ELLIOTT was now an IDIOT-BOY. He had been one of the earliest sufferers, and his attack had been proportionately severe; but, though life was spared, reason was shattered. During the violence of his malady, when delirium caused his senses to wander, it afforded a melancholy interest to hear him repeat his various lessons in the school, or fancying himself as still maintaining order in his class, rebuking some rebellious urchin, or correcting some infant blunderer, till, after several days, stupor suc-

ceeded, and then his life seemed to hang upon a thread indeed; and though hope might still linger in the innermost recesses of a mother's bosom, she had apparently resigned him to his Father and her Father, to his GOD and her GOD.

But the sacrifice was not accepted, or, rather, the mandate was issued forth with additional bitterness in every clause, like the Patriarch's trial, when it was said to him, "Take now thy son,—thine only son—Isaac,—whom thou lovest." The disease, indeed, abated, but the listless eye, the moaning sigh, and the total lack of memory, gave melancholy forebodings of the too probable result. Still it was hoped that returning strength would renew the wonted vigour of the mind; and many a patient, melancholy hour did the mother sit by the side of her boy, watching but for one word that would give promise of returning reason, hoping almost even against hope, and endeavouring, even against conviction, to trace consistency in the disjointed sentences, or detect something that showed of reason or intelligence in the idle laugh or trifling occupation of the moment.

One day, while employed in the same painful trial, her hands occupied in some knitting, but her heart far away from the mere mechanism of her work, she had unconsciously dropped her ball of worsted from her lap; and, though the fingers still seemed to ply the busy task, she was lost to all around her, till suddenly recalled to her recollection by the laugh of her

boy at her side. He had picked up the ball, and unwinding it, had busily employed himself in tying together some feathers with which he had been playing, and then, delighted with his ingenuity, had laughed aloud at the fantastic creation of his hand. From that hour hope never dawned even on the mother's heart; she caught him in her arms, and hiding her face upon his neck, burst into a flood of tears, and felt that they were falling on her IDIOT-BOY. The poor child, unconscious of the cause of his mother's anguish, but instinctively comprehending that she was unhappy, tried to soothe the agony of her heart by placing in her hand the plaything he had made.

Mysterious, but wrought in mercy, are the links which unite a mother's heart to a helpless child! GEORGE ELLIOTT became a source of tenfold deeper interest to his parents; and, bitter as the dispensation was in its early stage, and unaccountable to their understandings while they tried to reason upon it, it became gradually softened down into calmer and more chastened resignation. They forbore to reason, and betook themselves to prayer, and the GOD of prayer answered by a message of peace to their hearts. "Be still, and know that I am GOD," combined at once the precept and the solace.

The school had always been his delight, and with that recurrence to early predilections which ever marked his wandering thoughts, he was unhappy till

tian love and sympathy, and adores with deeper love that Saviour of man's guilty race, who valued a cup of cold water and a widow's mite above the costlier gifts of the noble and the rich, and who Himself gathers the lambs in His own arms, and carries them in His bosom.

In the reädmission therefore of GEORGE ELLIOTT into our school, it was with little idea beyond that of giving him pleasure, and peacefully, if not profitably, occupying his time. I felt that the memory of the disease from which he had suffered was still too vivid among us, and there were still too many painful recollections, even in such young bosoms, for a look or thought of unkindness towards the helpless melancholy boy; and, the first step gained, a very little kindly management and vigilance would not only screen him from annoyance, but render him an object of interest and even of personal superintendence to all. I therefore at once hesitated not to give consent to his wishes, and advised his mother to bring him herself.

He came accordingly, accompanied by his mother. The tears stood in her eyes, as she gave him into the master's hands, and glanced around on the many still spared from so severe a visitation; but faith had wrought its perfect work, and I doubt whether, even at that moment, she would have exchanged her lot with the parent of any child before her.

Years passed on, and the child grew up into boyhood, and towards youth; but still the Sabbath-

George Elliott, the Idiot Boy.

"The Sabbath School was his delight."—*Page* 34.

School was his delight. He came to it as regularly as the holy day dawned upon him, and though, poor fellow, he made no progress, and comprehended little that was attempted to be instilled into his mind, there was a charm in the class which he first attended, which proved irresistible. He never quitted it; his early companions had gradually ascended to the higher ones, and in their turn had quitted the school for service; others had succeeded as young as the former tenants of the class, but still GEORGE ELLIOTT kept his place, and though one or two efforts were made to induce him to take his station with boys of his own age and stature, he still adhered faithfully and fondly to his own spot. The generations of a Sabbath-School quickly pass away, but he either comprehended not, or did not regard, the altered features and voices of his companions, and seemed not to comprehend that there was any distinction between himself and them. I think I can see him now, as he often stood before me in that lowly room, in the midst of about half a dozen little boys of seven or eight years of age, apparently as busy as the busiest of them, and hastening up when the class was summoned, with all the eagerness and importance of one who thinks he has learned his lesson well, and expects commendation for his diligence. He had once been able to read with tolerable fluency, and even now, with some stammering, could read the easier verses in the Gospels; and, as his companions did but

little better than himself, he probably was quite content to pass muster with them, and felt satisfied with his own performance. He could also repeat many a single verse of Watts's Hymns, and I well remember, in the delirium of his illness, his feeble voice articulating many a stanza. He was a holy child, even in the aberration of his intellect; and next to the school, —for that always maintained the first place in his regard, probably from some association connected with his early dignity as a teacher, or more probably because the service of one took precedence in point of time of the service of the other, and his first thoughts were given to the school,—but so it was, next to the school, the house of GOD was his delight. And if ever light descended on his darkened mind, if ever a glimpse of intelligence played upon his features, like a ray of the setting sun through the dark and arched window above his head, it was when listening to the word of GOD in His own house of prayer. Even the humble accompaniments of our village choir, and the untutored psalmody of our little congregation, lightened up his eyes with unwonted lustre, and struck some secret chord in his bosom, which responded in its own mysterious melody to the sound; and it had often struck me, that I should like to see the effect which the music of some deep and rolling organ, pealing along the vaulted roof of a cathedral, would have produced upon him. It is indeed a mysterious but merciful compensation of a gracious

Providence, that we so often find a love of music inherent in these apparently desolate beings; that, while all else is out of tune, and as it were but jarring discord, there is some hidden melody, some secret harmony in their spirit, which, for a time at least, hushes all into peace and joy.

As in the school, so in the church, GEORGE ELLIOTT retained his usual seat; but he exercised a supremacy in the one, which he never attempted in the other; and the slightest deviation from propriety or devotion in those by his side was sure to call forth an uncompromising gesture of rebuke; and as few felt inclined to give pain to the mild and gentle boy (and it was real distress to him to witness levity or inattention, when his own mind was wrapped up in solemn thought,—it might be unintelligible devotion), he long maintained an order and decorum which a master's rod or frown could scarcely have so effectually promoted. At times it would happen that some less kindly disposed lad, who might be in the service of a neighbouring farmer, and who felt not the association of lengthened interest and sympathy, would from an opposite seat attempt to tease him by ill-natured and unseemly gestures and grimaces, cautiously practised; but even this was at length forborne, for the poor boy, in the keenness of his distress at a conduct which he could not control, and which jarred so discordantly upon his mind, would burst into a flood of tears, and attempt to escape the

painful sight by hiding his face in his hands; so that, in reality, he exercised a secret but undisputed control over all the youthful portion of the congregation; and even with the giddiest and the most thoughtless, the example of the Idiot Boy would shame where it could not win. So beautifully did it illustrate, in its own degree, the Apostle's saying, that "GOD doth choose the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and the weak things of this world to confound the mighty, and base things of the world, and things that are despised, yea, and things that are not, to bring to nought the things that are."

There was something sweetly touching, too, in the instinctive tenderness with which he regarded his home, and especially his mother. He might not comprehend the link that bound him to that home and that mother's side; but it seemed as if he felt in the innermost recesses of his heart that it was a place of peace, like some sunny knoll or summer bank, on which he could recline and be at rest. And as he sat by his mother's side, or gazed up into her face, the almost conscious smile that played upon his features seemed to gush from some hidden source, some "springing well" of unutterable affection. It realized, in its own degree and measure, the protection and security of that strong tower into which the righteous runneth and is safe: and whatever jarred upon his spirits elsewhere (and there were times

when even his meek mood was chafed), the moment he crossed the threshold of his home, every feeling was hushed beneath the shelter and the safety of that roof, and he seemed to forget at once that anything had occurred to distress or ruffle him.

I know not why it was, but the impression was ever strong upon my mind that GEORGE ELLIOTT would be among the early summoned to his home. And so it was. There was no visible cause of decline; he grew up like other youths, save in the one point of rational intelligence; and even that infliction, painful as it might be to those connected with him, was so softened and mitigated by the merciful dispensations of Providence, that in all probability his share of happiness, or rather of enjoyment, was as great as theirs who had the privilege and the responsibility also of higher attainments. He had however scarcely numbered eighteen years, ere it was evident to all that he was not to be long among us. I know of no language that can give any idea of his disorder, save in the expressive phrase, "he *drooped*," and it soon became a general remark among us all, in the emphatic but simple words of an aged Christian that lived near him, that "the poor boy was going home apace." We could not indeed say of him as the venerable Mede said of himself, when asked of his health, "Why, I am going home as fast as I can, like a labourer who has finished his day's toil;" but we could add in the words of the same Christian, "and

I bless GOD I have a good home to go to." What is there not comprehended in that word, "home"—"sweet home"? The school-boy in his approaching holidays, the lad or lass in their first service, the sailor on his ocean-home, the soldier in the tented field, the traveller in his weary wanderings, the mountaineer in some far-off land away from his own blue hills, the missionary in his toil-worn journeys,—all these know, in their respective degrees, the feelings which the thought of home awakens; and as their steps draw nearer and nearer, and they recognise the well-known landmarks of their native village, or solitary cottage in which they drew their first breath and spent their earliest years, one can well understand how the heart throbs and the pulse quickens at the thought that in a few moments they shall be "at home" with those they love. And yet how many changes, it may be, in that home since they quitted it! how much to sadden even amid the joy! and even at the best they meet to part again. It is only "home in heaven" that has no interruptions, no drawbacks, no partings,—not in this perishable world, where jarring interests and fleeting joys will ever interrupt, where sin will mar, and pollution stain, and infirmity cleave to the dust of which we are made,—but eternal in the heavens, where there shall be no more sin and no more sorrow, and GOD shall wipe away all tears from our eyes; a home with GOD—a home with Jesus. Lingering

earthly love may cry, "Brother, or sister, stay," but faith lifts up the voice of cheering, and says, "Go in peace;" "go, *and sin no more.*" The burden of life is sin, the sting of death is sin; but to "sin no more"—oh, for that blessed hour to come! "Even so, come, Lord Jesus, come quickly!"

The poor boy still crawled to school and to church, but his feeble step and tottering knees and shortened breath told too truly of the difficulty he felt to secure these enjoyments. The school was at length omitted; its noise distracted, its hum and voices jarred upon his nerves, and one Sabbath "we missed him from his 'customed place." His usual post was untenanted, and the spot that had known him so long was to know him no more. It was no uncommon thing to miss a scholar from our ranks, when time and service called him away: and advantage was usually taken of the circumstance to impress upon the minds of those who yet remained among us, the snares and dangers to which the youthful pilgrim was exposed in thus going forth into a world so beset with trials, and all were called upon to join in a brief but earnest prayer, that GOD'S protecting grace would be over our brother or sister—that the lessons of humility, caution, and godly fear, so long inculcated, might be brought to their continual remembrance, and that the Holy Spirit would seal them His unto the day of redemption.

On this day, too, another was gone from us, and

we all felt he would return no more; but he was going, not *into* a world of trial and temptation, but *from* it. There was indeed a conflict to be undergone—the last awful conflict which frail and feeble dust has to endure; but the struggle once past, and

> Oh! what a burst of mind would flow,
> When disencumbered from this clod!

Our brother was not forgotten at the close of the Sabbath-School day, and many a youthful hand and many an eye were raised to heaven for the mercies of the covenant to the departing pilgrim. As I returned homewards, I went round by his father's cottage, and called in to see the poor boy. He was seated by the fire-side, with his school-books in his hands, still apparently conning over his lesson, as if anxious to be summoned to the wonted task; but it was a dying effort, and the last spark of life was feebly glimmering in the socket. I sat down by his side, and took his hand in mine, and after a word or two of kind inquiry I said, "My poor boy, I hope you have peace with GOD." He looked up in my face with almost intelligence in his features, and said, "O sir, Jesus Christ made peace for me long ago." And could I doubt the assurance? Could I doubt that He who gathereth the lambs with His arm, and carrieth them in His bosom, and gently leadeth those that are with young,—could I doubt that He had even from everlasting spoken peace to this wounded one of His flock? Could I look on that ebbing spirit,

and doubt the everlasting arms were even then beneath it, upholding, guiding, comforting,—the staff and the stay of the tottering feet, as it was about to enter the dark valley of the shadow of death? He had indeed known nought of this world's peace, but could I doubt that Jesus had said unto him, "My peace give I unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you"?

He suffered apparently no pain, beyond the exhaustion of increasing weakness; and his last moments were a quiet slumber, exchanged for the deeper but not calmer slumber of the grave. He never took to his bed, but used to sit on a lowly seat by his mother's side, generally with his head on her lap, and in that posture he entered into his rest.

I know not that there is any need to protract my tale by extracting a moral from its pages; but I may be allowed to express a hope that those who read this simple narrative will impress, not only on their own minds, but on those over whom they can exercise influence, that an IDIOT is no fitting subject for idle jest or cruel merriment; that, though apparently removed from the usual sympathy of his kind, even on his benighted soul the Holy Spirit of GOD sheds a peace and joy with which a stranger intermeddleth not; and that, in many an instance, though "earthly things" seem too high for their comprehension, yet "heavenly things," in their leading truths at least, are received with a simplicity and trust which may

well put to shame the higher intellect of their more gifted fellow-men.

I subjoin the lines, to which allusion has been made; they may be new to many readers, and those who have read them before will love to read them again. Their authoress was the late Mrs. Dixon, of Fell-Foot in Westmoreland.

On the Death of an Idiot-Girl.

WHO, hapless, helpless being, who shall strew
A flower upon thy grave,
Or who from mute oblivion's power
Thy disregarded name shall save?

Honour and wealth and learning's store
The votive urn remembers long,
And e'en the "Annals of the Poor"
Live in their Bard's immortal song.

But a blank stone best stories thee,
Whom sense, nor wealth, nor fame could find;
Poorer than aught beside, we see
A human form without a mind!

A casket gemless! yet for thee
Pity suspends the tender wail;
For reason shall a moral see,
While memory paints thy tender tale.

Yes! it shall paint thy humble form
Clad decent in its russet weed,
Happy in harmless wanderings' charm,
And pleased thy father's flock to feed.

With vacant reckless smile she bore
Patient the scorner's cruel jest,
With unfixed gaze would pass it o'er,
And turn it pointless from her breast.

Her tongue unable to display
The unformed chaos of her mind,
No sense its rude sounds could convey,
But to parental instinct kind.

Yet close to every human tone
Clung imitation's mimic power,
And she was fond and proud to own
The school-boy's regulating hour.

And o'er the mutilated page
Muttered the seeming lesson's tone,
And e'er the scholar's task was said,
Brought ever and anon her own;

And many a truant boy would seek,
And drag reluctant to his place;
And e'en the master's solemn rule
Would mock with grave and apt grimace.

Each heart humane would freely love
A nature so estranged from wrong;
And every infant would protect
Her from the passing traveller's tongue.

But her prime joy was still to be
Where holy congregations bow;
Rapt in wild transport when they sung,
And when they prayed would bend her low.

O nature! wheresoe'er thou art,
Some latent worship still is there;
Blush ye, whose form without a heart
The Idiot's plea can never share.

Poor guileless thing! just eighteen years
Parental cares had reared alone;
Then, lest thou e'er shouldst want their cares,
Heaven took thee spotless to its own.

Full many a watching eye of love
  Thy sickness and thy death-bed cheer;
And reason, while she joys, approves
  The instinct of a parent's tear.

Poor guileless thing! forgot by men,
  The heaving turf directs to thee;
'T is all thou art to mortal ken,
  But faith beyond the tomb can see.

Oh! what a burst of mind shall flow
  When, disencumbered from this clod,
Thou, who on earth couldst nothing know,
  Shalt rise to comprehend thy GOD.

Oh! could thy spirit teach us now,
  Full many a truth the gay might learn;
The value of a blameless life
  Full many a scorner might discern.

Yes! they might learn, who waste their time,
  What it must be to know no sin;
They who pollute the soul's sweet prime,
  What to be spotless, pure within.

Go then, and seek her humble grave,
  All ye who sport in Folly's way,
And as the gale the grass shall wave,
  List to a voice that seems to say:

"'T is not the measure of your powers
  To which th' eternal meed is given;
'T is wasted or improved hours
  Which forfeit or secure your heaven."

THE WIDOW'S SON.

CHAPTER I.

"Three sons I followed to the grave—and one—
Oh! can I speak of that unhappy son!
Would all the memory of that time were fled,
And all those horrors, with my child, were dead!"

Crabbe's Poems.

THE scenes which present themselves to a Christian minister's observation in his intercourse with his people are as various as the tangled yarn of which the web of life is composed. Or, to use a more Scriptural simile, they resemble Joseph's coat of many colours, outwardly indeed gay and fanciful, but too often, like the Patriarch's vesture, leading to and the source of much misery and sorrow.

"It must needs be that offences come," and it is one of those peculiar trials of a minister's course, of

which the world takes no cognizance, and for which it entertains no sympathy. If those offences indeed clash with the world's interests, or violate the world's code, the world instantly takes up a very high tone of morality, puts on its sternest face of indignation, and pushes the offender from its path with as little scruple or remorse as the succeeding wave washes over and erases the track of its predecessor.

I have not much respect for the world's morality; it can be indeed as prudish as the most prudish of maidens, as if it carried an especial fan, behind which to hide its face from every sin that appealed to Christian love, and would enlist Christian sympathy and long-suffering on its side, because there might be some mire and dirt, some taint and stain, which offended its delicacy, or might impeach its own purity, or interfere with its own interests. And with all this the world has the most convenient obliquity of vision, which, like the priest and the Levite in the parable, just turns aside its glance at the very moment and at the very spot where it would be inconvenient or hazardous to its own ease and well-being to look closer. Or, if I may quote a somewhat irreverent but shrewd observer of human nature, the world

> "Compounds for sins it is inclined to,
> By damning those it has no mind to."

It is no doubt true, that in thousands and thou-

sands of instances the sinner himself feels as little concern for his own state as the world does, provided that in the gratification of his indulgences he comes into no collision with the world's passions, prejudices, and pursuits. The sun rises as bright over a sinner's as over a saint's head; the dews and rains descend as fertilizing on the lawns, and pastures, and fields of the one as of the other; the world looks on him as prosperous and happy, and accordingly, in the language of Scripture, "Men praise him as long as he does good to himself" and to them. But let that sinner, in the prosecution of his own interests or pleasures, once commit a breach of the world's laws or maxims, or come into collision with the world's interests, and not only is he unceremoniously excommunicated and thrust out of the world's pale, but for ever after is he under the ban and brand of the world's curse and scorn. Not only is the door slammed in his face at first, which might be quite right and fair, but it is kept shut against him for ever. The world admits of no repentance; its sentence of exclusion is like the statutes of the Medes and Persians, never to be rescinded or changed. I do not mean to deny that, however incompatible with Christian charity, still all this might be very beneficial to morality, integrity, and honour, if it were universally enforced; but unhappily the world, while it most scrupulously and rigidly exacts to the very uttermost farthing the tithe of its own paltry "mint, anise, and

cummin," is notoriously lax in all "the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith."

There is indeed deep pity to be felt for many a one whom the world honours and approves; even in the plenteous garner the spiritual eye can discern a worm, which is already consuming the treasured hoard; in the idle laugh there rings a hollowness which sounds only on the spiritual ear, but neither the world nor the sinner knows or cares for this, though there be one heart at least which often heaves the sigh and lifts up the prayer for such an one over whom he is set to watch, but whose affectionate remonstrance or solemn warning is dismissed for that more convenient season which all mark out for themselves, and yet almost all forget to summon to their side.

It is not however to such an one that my present record has any reference. There is a pang far more bitter even than this, which but too often thwarts and disappoints one's dearest hopes, and in which there is such a strangely blended mixture of feelings —of the deepest sympathy and pity for the sinner, and yet such stern and righteous condemnation of his sin; and, withal, such bitter scorn and indignation at the world's wrong, which at every turn not merely shows him the cold shoulder, but sets that shoulder to thrust him out; which stamps a brand upon his brow more indelible than that of Cain, and hunts him "from pillar to post," till the poor out-

cast, driven at last to bay, in sheer despair turns round upon his pursuers, and in the vain and impotent attempt to repel his assailants is hunted to the death, and torn in pieces amid the yells and howlings of the pack. One knew, indeed, and felt in every burning tear, and every throb of the anguished heart, which was the most predominant feeling at the time: yet now, at the close of many a year, when all are beyond the reach of sympathy, and no sorrowing heart can be wounded by this record of a son's shame, and when one is looking calmly and dispassionately back on the varied events of that melancholy story, I think I may truly say that the world's wrong has wrought the bitterest feeling, and left its most painful impress on my memory.

And if, while I trace a sinner's guilty career, I could stir up some compunction in the world's cold heart for its proud contumely, its haughty repulse, its unfeeling sneers, its callous thrusting aside, and closing its barred doors against a poor erring brother's return, and driving him forth, as it were, with ban and curse to continued guilt and more perilous courses, I should not altogether look upon this record as unprofitably recalled from the chequered memorials of "My Parish."

I have said above that I am now calmly and dispassionately looking back upon the past, yet I find that I have mistaken my feelings, and now that I begin to reöpen memory's page and recall those

scenes which once passed so vividly and painfully before my eyes, I feel that I am reöpening wounds which time has but imperfectly healed. And though in one sense I had no personal interest in the individual beyond that which my ministerial responsibility involved, yet, as we all know, there are every now and then circumstances occurring which almost compulsorily enlist and entangle every feeling and energy of the heart, as if one were feeling for a brother or a child.

CHAPTER II.

Henry Carsdell was the son of truly honest and excellent parents, and who, though not themselves ranking among the labouring peasantry of the land, had yet risen from their ranks, and by their own industry and perseverance had attained a position of considerable independence and respectability. Marrying comparatively late in life, and not till each had saved a sufficient sum to insure a comfortable home, as well as start them in some remunerative business, they may be said to have commenced life—domestic and matrimonial life at least—with more reasonable prospects of happiness than many, who with far more impetuous feelings rush into its responsibilities and assume its duties without fore-

thought or preparation, and who, according to the old saying, "marry in haste, and repent at leisure."

They had only two children, the elder-born a daughter, and the second the subject of my present record. The daughter was, however, soon taken from them, and then all the affections, and cares, and labours of both parents were centred in the surviving boy, who certainly ran as great a chance, and had as promising an appearance, of being utterly spoiled, as any mother's darling was ever privileged to risk. Fortunately, however, for him, his father, though affectionate and kind, and as intensely wrapped up in his child's welfare as the less reflecting mother, was also a truly pious man, and moreover resolute and sturdy in carrying out what he felt to be right.

His business was in a great measure that of a corn-dealer or seedsman, though I believe he turned his hand to, and dabbled in, most commodities which might insure an honest profit. I cannot indeed say that he kept a shop, for I never saw anything in his window, save a handful of ears of wheat carefully tied together and suspended over one of the panes of glass, and which, I suppose, had once challenged admiration for their size and weight, but had long since shrivelled and dwindled into a very dusty assortment of empty heads. Now and then a turnip or root of mangel-wurzel, of more than ordinary dimensions, was seen through the window, as if to indicate the superiority of the seed from which it

grew, and to tempt some admiring grower or neighbouring farmer to purchase from the same store. But, generally speaking, beyond this no outward signs gave any indication of the active, bustling, and, as we all thought, lucrative business going on within and without; though, had you entered as a customer, you might have no doubt obtained almost every article connected with out-door operations, from a gate or a hurdle to a pea-stick.

With all his active, money-turning habits, however, Henry Carsdell, sen., was a man of great simplicity of character, as well as strong mind, and, as I have already said, of deep religious impressions. When he closed his window on the Sabbath,—though I imagine the ears of corn still dangled there in the dark as dustily as they did in the light, for in that respect,

"E'en Sunday shone no Sabbath-day to them,"—

but still, when he fastened up his shutters, or rather did not open them, on the Sabbath-day, his honest purpose was to shut out the world and the world's business; and if any man ever succeeded in the attempt, and, while he kept out the week-day's cares, let in the Sabbath-day's pleasures and enjoyments, Henry Carsdell was the man. And I really believe that, had it pleased GOD to have spared his life to check, or at least neutralize, by his own affectionate yet resolute training, the injudicious, variable, and

capricious fondness of the mother for their only child, that mother's grey hairs would not have gone down in such bitterness of sorrow to the grave.

I suspect the father had hereditarily the seeds of that fatal disease of England, consumption. In the comparatively still recent days of which I am writing, no remedy, no alleviation, no barrier against its inroads, was thought of or attempted. Science shook its head, professional skill looked on in silent helplessness, or laid its learned finger on the wrist, and sent its doomed victim to some distant spot or clime —to die out of sight. The poor smitten ones struggled onwards as far and as long as their tottering steps could carry them, and then laid them down to die. The rich might find alleviation and a brief respite in change of scene and clime, but no hospital then offered its welcome shelter and its exclusive attention to the insidious character of decline; no stethoscope lent its listening ear to detect the extent and nature of its ravages, and no pharmacopœia had then admitted among its formularies the life-giving restorative which a merciful Providence has so abundantly supplied from the very depths of the ocean.

Poor Henry Carsdell, therefore, made, I might almost say, no efforts to avert what he felt and knew to be the summons of death. His only effort and anxiety was to conceal his malady from the searching scrutiny of affection, and to assume a cheerfulness and activity painfully at variance with his feelings

is still over me, and I can get no comfort. I could almost wish it were the Lord's will to lay him low by my side, that we might sleep in the same grave."

"Oh, Henry!" sobbed his poor wife, "how cruel!"

"Nay, nay, dear, I 'm not cruel, but it may be I 'm a bit selfish. I am indeed sore distressed for the poor boy, but the Lord's will be done! When Harry comes home from school in the afternoon, let me see him directly." And then, as if whispering to himself, he added,

"Whatsoever my hand findeth to do, I must do it with all my might; for there is no work in the grave, whither I am hastening."

Young Harry was at this time nearly fifteen years of age—a lad of warm affections, of lively habits, and generous heart; but the keen-sighted eye of the father had discerned, even in its bud, an easiness of temper that frequently led him to yield compliance to the solicitations and suggestions of others, even while his own reason and heart condemned them. And, alas! though the father knew not the full extent, he was well aware that his mother had almost unconsciously fostered the evil principle by unwise concealment and palliation of his follies.

It is a sore evil, even from the days of the patriarch Jacob, that there should be undue partiality in a parent's heart towards one child over the rest; and it leads to sad and bitter consequences, when, as in the case of Isaac and Rebekah, the one child is the

favourite of the father, and the other of the mother; but I think it is, if possible, a still sorer evil, when parent comes into collision with parent over a faulty child; when one rebukes, and the other palliates; when one finds the fault, and the other finds the excuse, and that not unfrequently in the very child's presence.

Harry no doubt loved his father, and dearly too, but he feared him also, and, what was worse, knew where to find shelter in the ready protection of the indulgent mother, having found from experience that a rebuke administered in the presence of the latter was not only softened, but shortened too by an unwillingness to make his child a sharer or a witness in any dispute between them.

It must not, however, be supposed that the father shrunk in reality from the faithful correction of his child. Many, to my own knowledge, and many no doubt that I knew not of, were the pathetic scenes of earnest exhortation and counsel which the father gave to this his only son; and many were the earnest prayers he poured forth with him by his side, and still more the silent communings of his own heart, and wrestlings with GOD in behalf of his child. I often thought of Monica and her wayward child,* but the answer that was so abundantly vouchsafed to her was denied here, or rather the answer that was sent was that once given to a king of Israel, "I will not

* St. Augustine.

bring the evil in his days, but in his son's days will I bring the evil upon his house."

On the afternoon above alluded to, when Harry had returned from school, it so happened that I had gone to his house. I had received indeed a message from Mrs. Carsdell to say he had taken to his bed, and I had already entered and passed through the outer room, or shop, where the ears of corn still hung mournfully and sadly looking. I had got to the foot of the stairs leading to his bed-room, when I recognised the voice of the sick man; and as I ascended, and stopped at the door of his chamber, which was slightly ajar, I distinctly heard him, though in faint and feeble accents, and with interrupted voice, reading the counsels of another dying father to *his* son.

"And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy fathers, and serve Him with a perfect heart and a willing mind: for the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all imaginations: if thou seek Him, He will be found of thee; but if thou forsake Him, He will cast thee off for ever."

"O my son, my son," he added, "I may say as David did, 'I go the way of all the earth:' let my last moments be blessed in the hope that we shall meet again in heaven."

His utterance was now choked, and he sank exhausted on his pillow, while I could distinctly hear the sobbings of the youth, and the suppressed moan-

"Poor Harry was already kneeling by his father's side."
Page 61.

ings of the mother. I gently entered the room, and took my station in silence at the bottom of the bed. The dying man's eyes were closed, but his lips moved, and his bosom heaved a silent prayer; and when he gradually unclosed the glazed eye-balls, for a moment he saw me not. I drew nearer to his side, and he then knew me, or perhaps recognised my voice, and said, while the cold and clammy dews of death stood upon his brow, "Ah, sir! you are very kind:" and then, as if making an appeal to my best feelings, he gasped out, "My son, my son."

Poor Harry was already kneeling by his father's side, and as he buried his head in his hands he sobbed aloud. The trial had been too great for the exhausted strength of the poor man, and the thickened gaspings told that the last awful struggle was at hand. I hastily opened the little window, and drew aside the curtain, to let a breath of air fan his parched lips; and a ray of the setting sun entered and shone upon the dying man. A faint smile played upon his lips, and life was over.

CHAPTER III.

DEATH, to the outward eye, is but a stone thrown into the water; a ripple on the surface is perceived as it cleaves the stream, but it almost on the instant

closes again, and no trace of the disturbance or interruption is seen on its glassy mirror. And yet that stone, thrown by the heedless hand of an idle boy, might be withdrawn from some spot where it occupied an important place; it might be the supporting point of some arch or cavity in a wall, where a confiding bird had built its nest, and, on its removal, down came with it the roof and the sides which had sheltered the tiny home, and involved all in one unnoticed and uncared for ruin. The stream flowed on, gay and sparkling as before, the boy shouted as merrily on its bank as the ripple closed; but the nest still remained a ruin, and the poor smitten bird mourned, as birds *can* mourn, over the desolation and the wreck.

Something of the same scene occurred as the result of Henry Carsdell's death. I do not say that death was as an idle urchin that displaced the stone and pulled down the nest; far from it, he was GOD'S appointed messenger, and bore His commissioned errand; but I mean that society evinced nearly about the same amount of sympathy, in extent and duration, in the one case as it would have done in the other. Mrs. Timson, it is true, whose name was emblazoned over her door in thin spidery letters on a narrow strip of wood, as empowered by the Excise to sell "Tea, Pepper, Snuff, and Tobacco," did, on the afternoon after Carsdell's death, invite her neighbour Betty Blakesby to "a dish of tea," that

they might discuss over it the poor widow's expectancies. Tom Ball, too, a sort of itinerant pig-dealer and pig-killer, did indulge by way of condolence in an extra pot of beer at Mr. Dimbleby's of the Chequers, in order to talk over with the landlord how far he might persuade the widow to let him manage her late husband's business for herself and her son; and so, as he expressed it, "gradderly insinniwate myself into it all." Around the carpenter's shop, where poor Carsdell's last home was preparing, two or three boys from time to time lingered, and listened to that quick melancholy tapping which so plainly indicates the placing of those sickly rows of nails on the coffin's sides and lid. The village sempstress had been bespoken, and had gone up to the house of mourning, and was deep in all the mysteries of her calling, while at the little table in the back parlour, strewed as it was with "the trappings and the signs of woe," sate the poor heart-stricken widow, apparently listening to grave and economic details, but with every thought of her heart wandering up and down that darkened room above, where he was lying.

I do not know that there was much further indication of any active sympathy in poor Henry Carsdell's death; every one respected him, every one lamented his illness, and I can readily believe, that at the moment when the passing-bell gave out its deep-toned note of information of the event, or it may be

of warning to the living,—or, as poor Tom Hood phrases it—

> "His friends had told the sexton,
> And the sexton tolled the bell,"—

I can easily believe, I say, that as that note of death sounded in every ear, many a one with no feigned regret might say, "And so poor Carsdell's gone," and might add with something like feeling for his widow, "Poor woman! I wonder what will become of her,"—I can easily believe all this, and yet equally believe that on the morning after his funeral every one straightway forgot what manner of man he was.

I do not know whether, in agreement with old superstition, the bees were also "knocked at," and informed of the event. I rather think *that* belief had not yet reached the secluded villages of our midland counties, but still lingered in the more enlightened and educated metropolitan counties only. It may be that much of the melancholy cloud that afterwards darkened poor Carsdell's household may be attributed to the resentment of these tiny insects at this ominous neglect * on the part of the family, though I think the majority will be little inclined to admit such a supposition, and be far more ready to believe that the bees were in reality as unconcerned

* I have within the last two or three years heard the misfortune of a family in the neighbourhood of Enfield seriously imputed by the gardener of the family to his neglect of "knocking at the bees" when his master died.

and indifferent about the matter as the tenants of the human hives, and went about gathering their honey as busily and earnestly as if no neglect or disrespect had been shown them.

The memory of the past, however, did not so quickly pass away from that inner circle, where death with his iron-shod foot had so lately trodden. That visitant had left traces that could not be so easily removed; he had set up landmarks where he had been, that told distinctly and painfully of what had been taken down. When I see a roofless barn, or a tenement with its roof-tree fallen in, or a tree split and splintered by the lightning, I am reminded of death's footprints, and the crushing weight with which it treads and destroys, both in its antecedents as well as its results.

A lengthened illness had, in the present case, produced its usual withering influence on a business which mainly depended on individual exertion and personal sagacity and intelligence. It was not like Mrs. Timson's little grocery business, which she herself could arrange and manage, and perhaps all the better for want of her husband's meddling and interference; nor like Martha House's shop-window of sweets, which she and her old mother could assort, or leave unassorted, just as they pleased, and which in either case were equally tempting to their tiny customers. In Mrs. Carsdell's case, she felt at once how utterly incompetent she was to carry on the

varied and altogether out-of-doors business which her husband had so ably managed; and Tom Ball might perchance, as the vision floated before him at the Chequers, in his extra pot of ale, have gradually insinuated himself into the widow's graces, as far as the business was concerned, but for two hindrances, which at one kick demolished his basket of frail crockery as effectually as Alnaschar with his own foot upset his. The first was that Tom Ball had never been known to manage any business of his own with anything like lucrative industry, and indeed the village joke about him in reference to his calling was that Tom invariably carried his pigs to a bad market. It was too a principle of his, almost as irrevocable as that of the Medes and Persians—of which classic or scriptural authority however he had probably never heard—and only liable to be set aside by one contingency, which Tom contrived should as seldom as possible occur, and this principle was that no business prospered that did not receive "three wettings," one at the beginning, one during the progress, and one at the close, with as many interludes, by-plays, and intervening acts as he could squeeze in. The three however were indispensable, and as each "wetting" included as long a sitting as could be conveniently bestowed, it is evident that a large portion of Mr. Ball's valuable time was spent within the reeking atmosphere of the Chequers tap-room, and more to the enrichment of Mr. Dimbleby than

of Mr. Ball, or any one else. And as this rule of business was invariably adhered to by Tom, and applauded and encouraged by him of the Chequers, it was not found in its result materially to advance the fortunes or increase the respectability of Mr. Thomas Ball. His chances, therefore, as substitute for the steady, persevering, pains-taking, honest, simple-minded, pious-hearted Henry Carsdell were altogether baseless, save in his own imagination, even if the other hindrance had not existed. And that other was something of the same character as the first of the fifty-two excuses which the inhabitants of a certain town alleged to James I. for not firing a royal salute on his arrival within the precincts of their borough—they had no gunpowder, and which so satisfied the monarch that he dispensed with the enumeration of the remaining fifty-one. So here, there was no business to take to.

Mr. Carsdell was not a man to close his eyes against the future either in temporal or eternal matters. He had long seen death looming in the distance, and though at the first glance his heart sank within him, and there was that pulling at his heart-strings which told him life was still precious, yet as its approach drew nearer, and he entered into closer communion with it, and with Him especially who held the keys of life and death, it gradually lost so much of the sternness of feature with which it had first met his view; it was so altogether disarmed of

that which is its real sting, even sin; and now and then, in the communings of his own heart over GOD'S precious word, lifted up the veil, and revealed such glimpses of the "land that is afar off," and "the King in his beauty," that he learned to look death calmly and quietly in the face, even as a messenger that was bringing glad tidings.

At first indeed he had concealed in much tenderness from his wife, as far as he could, the inroads of disease; as long as he could keep out of doors and manage his different concerns, his language to her was always that of cheerfulness and alacrity; but the moment he felt that disease had advanced its approaches, and was henceforth, like a besieging force, shutting him up within the boundary of his own home, he threw aside all concealment, and spoke of his own departure as of an event nigh at hand, and discussed freely and openly with his wife all the considerations which might be likely to influence her future views.

"If Harry," he said, "were but a few years older, and it had pleased GOD to spare me to bring him into the management of my little business, he could have kept up this old house and premises for you: but it's just that sort of concern that neither boy nor woman can look after; and therefore, Hester dear, I'm just thinking that I had better wind up all my little matters as far as I can, and leave you only the boy and yourself to look after."

"Oh! Henry," sobbed his poor wife, "don't vex youself about us: the Lord will provide for us."

"I know He will, Hester, and it's that which makes me so cheerful and contented-like to go first. I know He will," he added, with an upturned look of grateful reverence; "it is His own word," and he here opened his Bible, and read the well-known verse he had so often prayed over—

"Leave thy fatherless children; I will preserve them alive; and let thy widows trust in me."

"But, oh, dear Hester, do not let the lad forsake GOD, and GOD will never forsake him."

Conversations of a similar kind and tendency were continually occurring, and every contingency and prospect of the future so affectionately and unreservedly discussed, and with such careful and provident regard for the welfare of both, that when the event did take place, Mrs. Carsdell felt that one source of anxious solicitude had been effectually closed up. Henry Carsdell's business, indeed, though extensive, had been of the simplest kind, and involved no intricate management, nor complicated and long-standing accounts. He bought in one market what he sold in the next, and sometimes in the same;—he had no stores, no granaries, no barns; when he ceased to buy, he ceased to sell; when *he* stood still, his business stood still, and one might almost truly say, when he stayed at home, his business stayed at home

as well. It was like his old watch, which he so regularly wound up every night as the clock struck nine: in his illness, as he needed it not, with the house-clock ever within hearing and in sight, he laid it aside, and ceased to wind it up, and of course it ceased to go; and so he no longer wound up his business by his daily rounds, and it too ceased to go.

Tom Ball's anticipations, therefore, of stepping into Mr. Carsdell's business-shoes were unceremoniously frustrated by what he always considered a personal unkindness and spite, and resented accordingly the arranging and settling of everything without his interference or aid, and so far upsetting the slight fabric on which he had built his future fortunes. Had Mr. Carsdell indeed died insolvent, leaving sixpence in the pound as payment for some large debt he might have owed Mr. Ball, he could hardly have felt himself more aggrieved,—nay, I think it probable, in that case he might have made a profitable investment and use of the incident by way of contribution and subscription from his neighbours; but as no ingenuity could elicit the smallest amount of sympathy, save from him of the Chequers, Mr. Ball accordingly considered it in the light of a personal wrong, and took the opportunity wherever he went of depreciating the widow, and prognosticating evil of the boy.

CHAPTER IV.

For a short time after Mr. Carsdell's death everything seemed to go on exactly as it had done during his illness, and curiosity was sadly puzzled to make out what the widow intended to do, or in what way and to what extent her husband had provided for herself and son. Mrs. Timson, the village groceress, was exceedingly mortified to find that the few hints she had ventured to throw out in confidence to Betty Blakesby, the washerwoman, when she had invited her to tea and gossip, had not the slightest foundation in reality; and Mr. Ball, with expressive significancy, was in the habit among his intimate associates—and those were all who assembled at the Chequers—of putting his thumb to his nose, extending all his fingers, and declaring that he saw a long way.

Be this, however, as it may, the poor widow was happily unconscious of it all, and went on her way as calmly and composedly as if wasps had no sting, and tongues no venom. Young Harry continued his attendance at Mr. Monkton's "Commercial Academy for Boarders and Day Scholars," being one of the latter ones; and every day seemed to indicate greater steadiness, increasing regularity, and proportionate improvement. The recollection of his father's dying hours, and the sound of that father's dying voice,

seemed to have left a very deep and abiding impression: one or two of his old associates, with whom he had been frequently seduced into playing truant, were gradually dropped; and his evenings, which had been far more frequently passed in idle play and boisterous games, were now far oftener spent by the side of his widowed mother, to whom, it was observed of all, he exhibited a deferential respect and reverence, blended with the most winning and affectionate attachment.

It was, however, soon known that it had been the wish of the father that, as soon as Henry attained the age of fifteen, he should be bound apprentice to some trade, and that he had made provision for such arrangement. It had indeed been well understood by the mother, and assented to by her, that such a settlement should be made for her boy, and that when it did occur she should leave her present residence, and occupy a far humbler but more suitable home for her diminished means. I had been early taken into their counsels, at least so far as to have my opinion asked and my judgment sought; and I confess that at the time I thought Mr. Carsdell left too little to the discretion of his widow. Experience, however, had no doubt taught him how slight that discretion was when weighed in the balance with affection for an only child, and how soon overpowered her judgment might be by the solicitations of one so fondly loved.

It was not long before both were put to the test and found wanting in the very point in which firmness and resolution were so essentially requisite. The future calling of the boy had often been discussed by those anxious parents in that little back parlour, when Harry was fast asleep and dreaming only of the morrow's game. The father's manly habits naturally suggested an out-door occupation; both himself and his wife had sprung from those who tilled the soil that others owned, and, though he would not have wished his son to return to a labourer's lot, he looked with somewhat of contempt on what he considered the puny labours of an in-door trade. Mrs. Carsdell, on the contrary, had a considerable inkling for what she considered to be within the precincts of gentility; and the further it was removed from herself, the more anxiously she peered through the vista of futurity to see if she could catch one glimmer of it for her son. The discussions, therefore, in the back parlour had all the interest and excitement of opposition and contrariety of wishes at least, if not of opinion. As long as her husband's manly, right-minded mode of judgment held her up, the discussions generally ended in her yielding to his views, especially as she had nothing in reality to yield at the time, and hope still gently told its flattering tale for the future.

It was therefore understood, rather as an arrangement acquiesced in than finally settled, that Henry,

at the proper age, should be bound to a carpenter and wheelwright in the adjoining village, and till then remain under his mother's eye and roof. The events which had occurred had prevented the mother from dwelling on the plan, or even recalling it to mind except as some distant contingency which might or might not come to pass. Nor was it till Harry had already passed the appointed age, and his father's will was to be carried into effect as regarded her son and herself, that the arrangement came before her with any distinctness of view. It was necessary, of course, in the first place, that Harry himself should be informed of the intended arrangement; and I have no doubt that in doing so his mother dwelt on her disappointment and her own long-cherished hopes and views, and, it may be, suffered herself to hint at her disapproval of his father's plans for his future course. Had she at once openly stated those wishes, and her own intentions sacredly and fully to carry them into effect, there can be little doubt that the lad would have acquiesced in the arrangement, as a matter of course, without scruple and without question, nay, even with delight at a plan which involved no separation from home.

But she, in her short-sightedness, dropped a seed which was to produce an abundant crop to the blighting of every hope, but which in its first growth—in the blade at least—gave no indication of that deadly harvest which was to spring up from

this apparently casual letting fall of one unnoticed and forgotten seed. I at once acknowledge too, that, consulted as I was by the anxious mother, I did not see any danger in her change of purpose. I did indeed suggest the sacredness of a dying father's wishes, but as those wishes were assuredly not commands, and even by his own arrangements left in a measure to the control of the surviving parent, I did not see the expediency of interfering further with the wishes of the mother, seconded as they now were by the earnest desires of the youth himself. It was therefore finally determined that Harry should be placed in the large establishment of a very flourishing linen-draper in the county town, and, as a necessary consequence, that he should leave his mother's home, and be boarded and lodged under his master's roof, and form a member of his household. It was too far off from my own sphere of duty for me to take any very active share in the arrangements. I did indeed call once at Mr. Birch's house, and saw the master of the establishment, and he spoke fairly and honourably, but with much candour, of the difficulty of supervision over so many in their hours of relaxation and amusement. Under his own eye and in his own house he exercised a vigilant control; beyond that he could promise little.

I was not indeed quite satisfied; but I was neither parent nor guardian: and so, with many a solemn exhortation, and many a fervent prayer for GOD'S

protecting and upholding grace, the youth left the roof which had so long sheltered him, to encounter trial and temptation in a more extended sphere than the lowly scenes of his village home. His departure was quickly followed by his mother's change of residence to a small cottage at the end of the village green, and her final separation from those associations which so vividly recalled the past; and yet she fondly carried with her to her new abode all that could remind her of past occupations and past happiness. Even the old dried bunch of ears of corn, which had so long flapped over what had been called the shop-window, was carefully removed, and once more exhibited its sapless form over the fireplace of her little parlour, occupying a sort of inquisitorial or rather patronising position over three triangularly-placed black profiles of herself, her husband, and her child.

CHAPTER V.

YOUNG Harry's departure from his home made no perceptible difference in the ordinary routine of life amid the inhabitants of ——. I question whether all knew of it, or any cared about it. Mrs. Timson did not think it an event of sufficient importance to entitle Betty Blakesby, her usual crony for

gossip, to an invitation to tea; and Mr. Ball's sentiments on the occasion may be gathered from a brief dialogue between himself and him of the Chequers, as he sat there the next evening, his mind no doubt dwelling on his own vocation as well as his disappointment, and still rankling with the slur which he felt had been cast upon him personally as well as professionally; he suddenly propounded the following question to his host, between the whiffs of his pipe:—

"I say, Master Dimbleby, do you think as how, if I were to try, I could make a silk purse out of one of my pig's ears?"

"Why no, Tom, I do n't think the material would suit," was the sage response.

"And yet," was the rejoinder, "Madam Carsdell is a-trying it; that is, a-trying to make a gentleman out of her cub, and I do n't think as how the material will suit there, or that Madam herself is quite up to the cut."

Leaving, however, Mr. Ball to his pipe and bile, there was at least one home where poor Harry's departure made a sad chasm. Death had already made one which could never be refilled, but still, while her son flitted about the house, while his voice was heard, and his laugh rang beneath the old rafters, and his kiss was daily imprinted on her cheek, and she could throw her own arms around his neck, the void, though not unseen nor unfelt, was in some

measure supplied, and, as is so often and so providentially the case, the bereaved and the widowed heart found its grief for the missing one soothed and diminished by its daily care and anxiety for the living.

But now even this was at an end: at first, perhaps, the subsequent change of residence prevented the separation being felt so keenly, but the humble furniture of one cottage is soon transplanted and rearranged in another. The little chimney ornaments soon occupied their appointed position; the tea-cups and saucers, and wine-glasses and tumblers, were once more comfortably located in the same triangular cupboard where they had so long reposed. Even the very cleaning had come to an end. Harry's little wardrobe had been carefully arranged, and packed in a papered trunk that had once contained her own assortment, when she first went out to service, and her mother had done for her what she was now doing with so anxious and so sad a heart for her own son. The morning of separation had come; they had sat and lingered over their early breakfast; little had been eaten, but much talked. Harry's heart was undoubtedly the lighter of the two, for though he felt sorrow at his first separation from home, yet that sorrow was naturally lightened to a young heart, which was looking more to the future than the present, and anticipating all the novelties of a county town, and that a town with barracks and

with soldiers. But, though Harry's heart was comparatively light, the mother's heart was heavy indeed, and felt all the bitterness of her widowhood over again, and perhaps in the inmost core of her heart for a brief moment wished her husband's choice had been hers, especially when the village carrier actually did call, and the trunk was stowed away in the cart, and Henry's last kiss was yet warm upon her lips, and his tear still moistened her cheek. There can be little doubt that Mrs. Carsdell, though in reality a religious woman, had yet suffered her son to grow up into an idol, and her affection for him to partake of an idolatrous devotion; and when that idol was removed out of her sight, and no longer employed her daily care, there was a far more painful void in her heart than when her husband was taken from her. Then, she could turn to Him that had smitten, and bless His name alike in what He gave, as in what He took away; but now, though it was her own act that might be said to have displaced her idol from its pedestal, she had first dethroned GOD himself from His place in her heart, and suffered a creature to usurp and absorb all those affections which can never be so intently fastened on a creature without bringing its own punishment in its immediate train. "Yea! and a sword shall pierce through thine own heart," was once said to a mother, even while she yet rejoiced over her new-born babe; but far more keen

the wound, when a mother's own hand whets the edge, and she is forced to read and to own her sin in the punishment that treads upon its heel.

No doubt, when GOD said, "It is not good that the man should be alone," He included the woman also: the heart wants something to love and to cling to; and woman's heart especially is so like the creeping plants and climbers of our gardens, that unless it find some object around which to creep and twine and throw out its clinging fibres, and unless, while it adds ornament and grace, itself derives nourishment and strength, it would but trail upon the ground, be soiled, and perish. So we all want something to interest and engage the affections, and if a human object be denied, it will run to waste on some living thing within its reach, which it may cherish and call its own. Mrs. Carsdell far more wisely, for a brief season, endeavoured to mitigate the loneliness of her situation by hiring a little village maiden, partly as an attendant and partly as a companion, that she might still hear the cheerful voice of youth and the light trip of youthful feet resounding in her cottage.

Harry too occasionally came home — sometimes on the Saturday evening, far more frequently, I am sorry to say, on the Sunday morning. The Saturday night's custom was too great and too absorbing to admit of the withdrawal even of one insignificant pair of hands, and, many a time, was extended almost to midnight and even beyond it, with the necessary

re-putting away of articles that had been exhibited for display and sale; and when the Sabbath dawned, and the wearied boy had arisen and started on his walk homewards of several miles, and had come in jaded and worn out, it was perhaps natural that his mother's house should more induce him to stay within, than GOD'S house to draw him there; and equally natural too that the fond and loving mother should prefer to stay with him and administer to his pleasure and comfort, and so far recompense herself for a week's absence, and often more. And thus it was no unusual thing, on those Sabbaths on which Harry returned, that both mother and son were absentees from divine worship. There was the morning walk from which to recover, and the evening walk back for which to prepare; and thus by degrees the whole day came to be neglected, and Harry gradually acquired an indifference and disregard to Sabbath duties, even under the very eye and sanction of a mother's counsel and example.

I am not aware that Harry neglected his duty to his earthly master. Mr. Birch indeed gave him the character of being a quick, intelligent lad, and as one whose light-heartedness and obliging demeanour rendered him a favourite among his customers. One day I had occasion to go to the town, and calling to see Harry, as I had promised his mother, I saw him busily engaged at one end of the large shop with some of the lower-class customers; and I could not

but be struck at the tone of jocularity and banter that was going on between the buyer and the seller. There was evidently some freemasonry of joke between them, which I did not understand, and I looked on with especial interest, if not with anxiety. Sundry articles had been sold and put on one side; and I then saw Harry turn round, and, taking a black bottle from a shelf near him, pour out what appeared to be a glass of gin, and hand it to his customer, who drank it off, and shortly after left the shop.

It was not till the afternoon that I had an opportunity of questioning Harry as to so very singular and almost disreputable a transaction, and I then learnt, to my extreme surprise and disgust, that it was the invariable practice of the house to offer to every customer, male or female, young or old, whom they thought it would not offend, and who spent a certain amount of money over the counter, a glass of spirits by way of bribe and temptation. I did not hesitate to animadvert most warmly on such a scandalous custom, but as of course Harry was only obeying the instructions he had received, I carried my complaint to the head quarters, and endeavoured to open Mr. Birch's eyes to the manifold and manifest perils of such a course, in his own family, among his young men, and perhaps still more fatally to the very class among whom he was so incautiously but so surely introducing the love and the habit of drinking.

I might as well have spoken to the winds. He received my remonstrances with civility, it is true, but merely said that it would be quite impossible to meet the competition he had to encounter, unless he proffered some counter-attraction beyond what others gave, and that he had found no lure so grateful or attractive as that of a glass of spirits.

"Besides," he added, "one or two rival shops have lately adopted the same practice, and it will never do to drop it now, and leave them undisturbed possession of the field."

"But have you no fears," I asked, "for your own household, Mr. Birch, that they may imbibe the same love. Are you not responsible for those you employ, that you put no stumbling-block in their way?"

"Certainly not in that sense. I might as well be called upon to lock up my till and cash-box, and suffer no money to pass through their hands, for fear they should be tempted by that. You may call that a stumbling-block in their way, and perhaps it is, but they know very well the result of yielding to such a temptation, and they know too that I allow of no deviations from sobriety under my roof."

"But," I said, "you teach them to tempt others to the very indulgence you would prohibit for themselves; you tell them you allow no intemperance under your roof, and yet under this very roof you train them up to entice others to the intemperance

you disapprove. For the sake of a little additional profit, you run the fearful hazard of bringing up a generation of drunkards; and the annals of crime, you know, too painfully testify how soon one evil habit, one fatal association, leads to the very guilt you have just alluded to, in order to find means for the indulgence of the sinful habit. Can you wonder, then, if your practice preaches louder than your precept?"

My word "*preach*" was an unlucky one, for he immediately said,

"I am afraid, sir, you often preach to unwilling ears, and I should be sorry to add one pair more to the number. I can only say that if Harry Carsdell's friends disapprove of his residence in my establishment, they are at full liberty to remove him." And then, as if desirous to erase any unfavourable impression, or, it may be, a little conscience-smitten, should any harm ensue, he added,

"Indeed I think, upon the whole, that it might be as well if Harry were now transplanted for a short time to some London establishment, where he might learn town practice. He has been here as long as he need be, and if his mother has no objection, I would write to my town agents, Messrs. Mercer and Co., and ask them to take him into their magnificent establishment. He is a sharp, intelligent youth, and a year's residence at the West End of London will fit him for any post. Perhaps you

will kindly mention this suggestion to Mrs. Carsdell. I assure you it is a somewhat valuable thing to get a young man into Mercer's house."

I did not kindle quite so readily as, perhaps, Mr. Birch expected, to the proposed exchange, and hinted somewhat at my apprehensions; but still agreed to communicate the offer to his mother. The removal from Mr. Birch's seemed indeed so paramount and imperative, though the world might have looked with a very approving eye on the evident change that had already taken place from a somewhat uncouth village lad to the tall and almost graceful youth, who had rubbed off the asperities and angular points of his rustic education, and grown up into a handsome and somewhat dashing-looking figure and demeanour, with ingenuous and pleasing manners. Yet whatever might be the outward improvement, and however gratified a mother's eye, as it gazed on the exterior alone, one could not but fear and feel, that as the frame had strengthened and developed itself, so the principles had gradually become weakened; and as he had been taught, by his mother's connivance and example, to set aside GOD'S commandment on the Sabbath-day for his own ease and comfort, so had he learned from his master's practice and tuition that the well-being of another's soul might be superseded and imperilled for his own interest and advantage.

CHAPTER VI.

SUCH had been the result of the first phase of what we may call Harry Carsdell's public life; and yet when, after much discussion and much entreaty on Henry's part, his mother had consented to his removal to London, and he had returned for a short period to his village home, to spend a few days with her before his departure, one could not but own that there was much to justify a mother's pride and the cordial reception he met with on every side. Even Mr. Ball acknowledged that "the chap was not much amiss," but still suggested that "Lunnun was the place to try what metal a man was made of." And it certainly is so, even now, when there are so many appliances for good, so many efforts for the moral and spiritual welfare of the young. At the time of which I am writing, no "Christian Associations for Young Men" had ever entered into the heart of any to conceive, far less to carry out in all their present wide-extended ramifications, and the young were too often left to drift down or stem the tide just as they could. No doubt many, through the grace of GOD, were preserved amid the perils and temptations that met them on every side, and became valuable and useful members of society; but one cannot but fear that many, perhaps even the

majority, had not the moral strength nor the holy resolution to shun the fatal allurements to sin by which they were surrounded, or escape the taint of the atmosphere in which they lived; and many, too, far more than the world ever knew or heard of, were swallowed up in the deep and unfathomable gulf of London profligacy, and made speedy shipwreck of every hope for time and for eternity.

London, I believe, is awaking to a sense of responsibility in this matter, and has come to the conclusion that human duty is not developed nor defined by providing hospitals where disease may be healed and suffering abated, or erecting penitentiaries, where sin may hide its shame and have a feeble chancè of being once more received into the unpolluted human family; or prisons, where crime may be curbed and punished; or gallows, where it may expiate its earthly offence;—but that Christian charity should begin at the beginning, should arrest disease in its germ, ere it has matured and scattered its poisoned seeds; should crush sin in its bud, ere it has ripened into action; and be more early to implant what is good, than wait to pull up that which is noxious, and has been suffered to grow unweeded and unchecked in all its rank luxuriance.

Education, and all the holy and humanizing influences of Christian association and fellowship,—a growing conviction, even in these mammoth days of Mammon, in the minds of many and many an em-

ployer, that man is not a mere machine wherewith to dig or delve,—simply a passive drudge, to toil at and turn the wheel of man's cupidity,—but that he has intellect to be enlightened, feelings to be consulted, sympathies to be awakened, affections to be won, and aspirations to be guided,—all these combined and increasing means of amelioration have rendered and are still rendering the metropolis a very different scene from what it was in the consulship of Plancus, or when Harry Carsdell first set his foot amid its jostling and unheeding crowds.

It would be unjust to say that Henry did not set forth with most earnest and sincere intentions of fulfilling every duty and realizing every hope. His affection for his mother was most genuine, nor have I the least doubt that the uppermost feeling in his heart at this period of his quitting home, was to raise himself by his own talents and industry to such a position as would enable him to have an establishment of his own, and to place his mother at its head. He went, too, backed with many a prayer from minister and mother; the few days' interval spent at home had afforded opportunities that had not been lost of reiterating the counsels of earlier years, as well as pointing out the mischiefs of such a system as had been pursued in his first situation, and the still greater risk of harm in the wider sphere and more enlarged companionship of his future home. I firmly believe that Henry's heart was as yet un-

contaminated by actual vice; that his feelings and the bias of his mind were decidedly on virtue's, nay, on religion's side; and that had any one suggested at such a moment the possibility of a fall, he too would have replied with as little hesitation, and perhaps a far sincerer spirit, "Is thy servant a dog, that he should do such things?" No doubt it would have been a wiser and a safer exclamation, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against GOD?" And many a time had I pressed him to bind, as it were, this holy text around his neck, or rather to keep it treasured in the very depths of his heart, as a safeguard against sin, that it should be "a lamp unto his feet, and a light unto his path."

I dare not say that Harry was, in the real meaning of the expression, a converted child of GOD, or a pious youth; a well-disposed one he assuredly was, and at the period especially when he first left home, and even now that he was leaving it a second time, would have shrunk with honest shame from open and avowed sin; but he had also a most sensitive dread of being laughed at, of becoming the mark for a jest or sneer, and even those whose influence over him he in his heart despised had often gained their end by their knowledge of this weak point in his character. I can easily believe that in the wider sphere of metropolitan temptation his compliances were at first in things apparently innocent in themselves, which scarcely put even caution on its guard, but which

were perilous, if not criminal, as regarded himself, because they led him within those precincts where fear was off its guard, and pleasure displayed no sting. But such places are the tempter's peculiar ground, and the ancient "Apologue" of the saint's remonstrance with the evil one is founded, if not in truth, at least in sound knowledge of the human heart and of human weakness.

"How," asked the saint, "could you presume or dare to assault so holy a man?"

"I went not to the church to seek you," was the devil's reply, "but you came to me to the play-house, and that was my own ground."

Alas! many have found it so, and many may trace their first departure from holiness and purity to insidious whispers on this the tempter's ground. It is no new truth, no novel temptation; it is so old that one might almost think it worn out, so worn out as to be fit only to be thrown aside, and so in one sense it is, for the same lie has been held up before every sinner for nearly six thousand years; but still in another sense it is ever new—new to the young and inexperienced heart, against which its battery is brought and played for the first time. Yes! the first step in sin is ever new, and he who suffers himself to approach so near the confines as to be able to look over the hedge and see the tempting fruit spreading its luxuriant growth before him, and, as he looks, sees others gathering, and eating, and

enjoying with eager, animated haste, and more flocking in at every moment to pluck and gather also, and thus, like her who was first tempted and who first fell, sees that the fruit is "good for food, pleasant to the eyes, and much to be desired,"—who can wonder if, having come so near, he too takes one more step within the forbidden enclosure, and puts forth his hand and gathers—only this once? Moralists and mothers tell us that the hardest word in the English language, or indeed in any language, for youth to learn is the little monosyllable, "NO;" but the most dangerous and fatal to learn is that little word, "ONLY;" only this once, only so much, only so far. Yes! that word "only," in Johnson's phrase, is "the fatal Cleopatra" which has lured on so many "to lose the world, and be content to lose it." Place but one foot over the forbidden boundary, and the other will assuredly follow; nay, travel but one yard in the devil's company, and he will compel you to go twain with him.

Such no doubt was the simple process of poor Harry's declension from the right way—at first so gradually, so imperceptibly, so unsuspiciously on his part, that, though keener and more experienced eyes saw the danger, and even spoke in kindly warning, he was more inclined to resent the counsel as an unjust suspicion than receive it as the suggestion of a friendly feeling. No doubt in so large an establishment as that in which Henry was now placed there

were associates and companions of every grade and class; but, as in the more limited one in the county town, little control could be exercised, or in fact claimed, except in the hours and seasons when their services were required. I pretend not to be acquainted with the rules and regulations of London establishments such as that I am describing, and am far from imputing blame and censure where none may probably be due, or expecting a supervision as minute and vigilant as that of a master over his household servants, or a tutor over his pupils, or a father over his children. I know too that at the present day there are employers of young men, and to as large an extent as the largest of those days to which I allude, who do hold themselves morally responsible for the well-being of those in their employ, and who are earnest in season and out of season to do them good, and who are indefatigable, sparing no amount of time, nor labour, nor money, to bring every valuable and holy influence to aid in moulding their pliant hearts to whatsoever things are true, and honest, and just, and pure, and lovely, and of good report, and who, above all, are themselves earnest by their own consistent and Christian walk and unwearied labours of love to win them not only to think on, but to do these things. Far, therefore, be it from me to pen one word that may peradventure sound harsh or unjust towards a class, of which so many adorn the doctrine of GOD their

Saviour in all things. It must needs be that offences come, but woe indeed unto those by whom the offence cometh, and who, by their own evil example, their plausible sophistries, their heedless jesting, and callous contempt of consequences, put a stumbling-block in a weaker brother's way.

It were unnecessary to detail the process of poor Harry's downfal: if I might dare to say such a word, though I knew him to be guilty,—guilty in the eyes of the world, guilty before man, and, in another sense, deeply, most deeply guilty before GOD, —yet of the actual charge on which he was arraigned, I fully and altogether acquit him of all intentional crime. It was long before any tidings of misconduct reached his village-home. Evil news indeed travels proverbially quick; but communications with the metropolis were few and far between: a village community has few wants that are not supplied within itself, and has little need to extend its wanderings at least beyond a neighbouring market town. It was positively a work of time, of forethought, and management, to compass a journey to the metropolis; and though not perhaps so encompassed with peril and uncertainty, that a traveller, as in days of yore, would think it necessary to make his will and set his affairs in order ere he set out, yet few in reality ever dreamed of such an adventure, and fewer still accomplished it.

In those days too of false political economy, when the heavier the tax, and the larger the impost, the greater was considered the return, and the more abundant the revenue, an almost prohibitive tax was laid on letters; and many a father and mother, in the lowlier and poorer class, never heard from the distant and separated ones of their family from year's end to year's end, unless by some casual channel or accidental windfall of intelligence; and many a richer one, too, found frequent communion with their absent dear ones a luxury too expensive for frequent enjoyment. Harry's communications home, therefore, were but seldom; but their infrequency, though his mother sighed over it, excited no alarm, nor raised the slightest suspicion. The first intelligence even of disapprobation on the part of his employers was in a communication made to myself, and that not an authorized one, but simply mentioned as a circumstance connected with one in whom I was known to take an interest, and which might probably, if known, lead to kind and effectual remonstrance: and even this was almost a casual remark made by Henry's first master, and who had recommended him to his present situation, asking if we had heard very lately of or from Harry Carsdell.

His look rather suggested than sanctioned apprehension, and I could not help replying,

"No, I do not think his mother has heard for

some considerable time, and she always sends me word when she has had a letter. But why do you ask, have *you* heard any tidings?"

"Not exactly tidings; but I had occasion to be in London a few days ago, on business matters, and among others to call on Messrs. Mercer's; and, though I did not see Harry, I asked after him, and I did not hear exactly what I liked, or could have wished."

"What was it?" I eagerly asked. "I hope no evil habits,"—and for a moment my memory recurred to what I had witnessed in Mr. Birch's own shop,—"no dangerous associations, no sinful compliances."

"Why, you see, sir, in a large establishment like that, where there are more than a hundred young men, there must be a vast variety of characters, and great difference of principles, some quiet and some racketish, some steady and some unsteady. Even with every care to select aright, much must be left to the honesty of other people's recommendations, and you know how, even in the limited range of two or three household servants, dishonest and careless recommendation too frequently introduces a bad sheep into the flock. I call it, sir, dishonest, because it is in reality a connivance in fraud; and though some think to justify it on the score of kindness and good nature, there is a far larger balance of unkindness and ill-nature to the party you wrong,

and it is also a very questionable kindness and benefit even to those you profess to oblige."

"I quite agree with you," I said; "but what about Harry?"

"Well, I was saying, that among so many young men it would be hardly possible to steer clear of some queer ones, and unhappily it too often happens that the very ones you would disapprove of in other matters, are the very quickest, and best, and most attractive salesmen, and a master looks mainly to that. And I am afraid, from what I have heard, that Harry has become very intimate with one of this stamp, of very loose morals, and, as it was hinted, of habits of expenditure beyond his means; and over whom, therefore, as well as his associates, they have deemed it necessary to place a secret but unremitting watch. And I think, you know, that a kindly hint to young master Harry may save him from a world of mischief and discredit."

It was a painful train of thought to which this conversation led, and I meditated and mused over it all the way of my road homewards, looking at it in every shape and form till I really was puzzled what to do. Should I mention it to his mother? She was perhaps the worst counsellor he could have, save in the affection which might perchance still find a ready response in his heart; but letters after all are such poor substitutes for living words, for the earnest tones of a mother's voice, the impassioned gaze of her

loving looks, or the silent beseechings of her tears: nor had Mrs. Carsdell, it must be allowed, at the best, the pen of a ready writer. Should I write then myself? or, better still, go to London and see Harry, and appeal to his better feelings? Alas! alas! while I was thus musing, the blow had already fallen, the mischief was already done; and on the following morning, while I was still painfully pondering over the communication of the preceding day, and had almost resolved to lose no more time in proceeding at once to the metropolis, it was announced to me that Mrs. Carsdell was waiting in great distress to see me. I never felt so acutely the truth of the observation, that "conscience doth make cowards of us all," for though my own conscience was at ease, and "my withers were unwrung," yet I instantly felt that sinking of the heart which told of guilt detected, of shame, and ruin, and misery, which, if possible, loomed more appallingly through the very mist of uncertainty and suspense than if it had stared at one through the very grating of a felon's cell.

It was therefore with no small emotion that I saw the poor widowed mother enter the room. She immediately sank into a chair, and began to sob with a vehemence that was almost alarming, did not one feel that nature—nay, let us not dishonour nor deny the giver—rather, the Almighty in His compassionate providence had made these very outlets and chan-

nels for the overwhelming tide and gush of feelings, which would otherwise break and burst the pent-up heart, if it found not vent in these heavings and tossings and breakings of the waves, in which, as it were, the storm spends its fury, and from its very violence becomes lulled into calm.

Poor Mrs. Carsdell's information confirmed the worst apprehensions; not perhaps more than Mr. Birch intended to convey when he hinted at the danger into which poor Harry was so heedlessly running. As I have already said, it is needless to detail the process by which Henry fell, even if I understood it; nor in fact was Mrs. Carsdell at this moment in possession of further information than a letter from one of the partners in the firm, in which he stated that one of their young men had been for some time suspected, and at length detected in some very serious acts of dishonesty and embezzlement, for which he had been committed to gaol for trial; and that unhappily her son had been so very intimate with the defaulter, and so much had transpired, as to lead to some suspicion that he had been implicated in his nefarious transactions also, though he trusted it would prove otherwise, that the magistrate had decided on committing him for trial also. There was an evident reluctance to write or to think unkindly, and the letter spoke with much feeling of the painfulness of the writer's position, as prosecutor of a youth in whom he felt much interest.

Still there was the fact. Harry was in prison, was committed for trial, and was to hold up his hand at the bar of the Old Bailey on the ensuing sessions. His poor father's image, on that evening of his death, rose up before me; and though at that moment of bereavement the dispensation seemed mysterious and painful, yet one now felt the truth and the purport of the prophet's words in all the mercy of their meaning, that "the righteous is taken away from the evil to come."

It has often been a question with many, and one has at times loved to indulge the feeling, and it may be the hope, that the spirits of the departed are permitted to have cognizance of the things of earth, and to hover over those loved ones, from whom they have been separated; or, in other words, that to them are delegated in some measure the office and employment of our guardian angels. But I do not see one trace of such permission or such knowledge in the whole length and breadth of GOD'S word; but, on the contrary, much that altogether negatives such a supposition: nor does it indeed recommend itself to our idea of the fitness of things that it should be so; that a being once mercifully removed from all the cares and sorrows and sins of earth, should be permitted, nay, sent again as a disembodied spirit to linger in the very atmosphere from which it has escaped, and to be a mourner over so much it must witness both of sin and suffering in those it loved, and still loves.

And for what end? for whose boon and good are they sent? their own? Their very errand must be so often one of sadness, that one might almost expect to hear, not that cry of vain desire which burst from the prophet's heart in the midst of all he witnessed, but the very flight of the wings with which he longed to flee away and be at rest! Is it for the good of those to whom they are said to be sent, over whose path they hover, and in whose well-being they are supposed to take so deep an interest? I can well imagine that in moments of bereavement, of deep and recent sorrow, such a fantasy of the beings they loved on earth being permitted to look down on those with whom they dwelt, and to mingle, though unseen, with the endeared associates and amid the scenes of their human existence, may and must have a soothing and benign, and it may be even a holy influence, and for a time, a brief season, may exercise a salutary restraint on their ways and works; but we may depend upon it, if they are not far more constrained by the love of Christ, and awed by the real presence of Him who is about their path and about their bed, and spieth out all their ways, neither will they be persuaded nor won, though one came to them from the abodes of the departed.

Thoughts of this kind came almost unbidden into my mind as I reflected on poor Harry's present situation; and as I saw the agonizing grief of his widowed mother, one could not but gratefully acknow-

ledge that his father had indeed been taken away from much evil, which would have wrung from his heart that bitter cry of David over his erring son, "O my son, my son! would GOD I had died for thee, my son!"

It was a painful struggle to the mother's feelings. Her first impulse was to leave home for London, without a moment's delay, and weep upon his neck —but to what end, save the indulgence of a natural sorrow, and the assurance of her forgiving love? It was hard to repress that desire, it was still harder to convince her that it could be of no service, that a poor weak widow-woman, with eyes dimmed with tears, and an utterance choked by sobbings, and an affection that in its strong glare permitted not of that calm and steady gaze which alone could take in all circumstances, and give fitting counsel in such an emergency, would be rather a hindrance than a help.

"Oh, sir," was her impassioned cry, "I must go, I must go, if I walk all the way."

Her grief, that refused to be comforted, reminded me of that poor stricken mother in Scripture weeping for her children; yet Rachel's were beyond the reach of anxiety, though not of sorrow, and even her sorrow was not the sorrow of one without hope: and this poor mother felt perhaps more like the widow woman of Sarepta, whose heart and soul was wrapped up in her labour of love for her son's sake, that they might once more "eat together and die."

However, as in the case of Mrs. Bradley, who would have rushed out in her maddened haste to meet her mangled husband, it was necessary to exert somewhat of authority and control, and I therefore said,

"Mrs. Carsdell, at this moment you are not the fitting judge of what is best for your poor boy's interest. If affection were all that was wanting, I would say to you, Go, and go at once: but there is much in which your very love would be a hindrance, nay, would most probably lead you to do wrong, when you would do right. The first step is to ascertain, as far as can be done, the real facts of the case. I will never believe Harry to have been guilty of deliberate dishonesty and wrong, but he may have suffered himself to have been drawn into a guilty participation in another's fraud from inexperience and good-nature; and it is necessary that all this should be sifted and made clear, that if the law cannot altogether acquit, he may at least find mercy for his youth and his previously good and unimpeached character. All this you cannot do; but you shall write to your son, and pour out the sorrows of your heart to him, and I will carry him that letter, and place it in his own hands. I had almost resolved on going up to town when you came, and this has clenched the purpose: I will go to-morrow, and see Harry, and speak words of counsel and comfort to him."

"The blessing of the GOD of the widow and the fatherless be upon you!" was her only answer, and she was about to throw herself on her knees before me, to clasp my feet in the agonies of her entreaty to do all I could to save him; but I gently repressed her, and merely said,

"Reserve that posture for GOD, and be as earnest with Him, that your poor son may be brought to a knowledge of his sin, and so even the bitterness of this affliction may be overruled for mercy, and that you, when you too once more fall upon his neck and kiss him, may have reason to exclaim, in the gratitude of your heart, 'This my son was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.'"

CHAPTER VII.

I LOVE to trace the Lord's guidance even in the most apparently insignificant things. I do not suppose indeed that our Lord meant us to understand literally His assertion that "the hairs of our head are all numbered;" it would be no comfort, no additional stay to a child of GOD, if they were; but I believe our Lord fully meant us to gather from it the blessed truth, that things as minute, and to our idea as trifling, as a hair of the head are all known

to and directed by GOD. Disappointment and failure would be very bitter things, if we did not feel they were of the Lord's appointment; and perplexities and troubles would be hard to unravel and find our way through, if we could not take them to One who careth for us. A child's sorrows may be comparatively very light and evanescent, but they are a sorrow to the child, and that child may therefore take the simplest grief to his Father and ask its removal. It was a touching prayer which a poor ill-used, over-worked, starved child was overheard to utter, when it dragged its feeble emaciated frame to the hole where it was doomed to sleep, "O Lord, help me to do my work to-morrow;" and the Lord heard the cry of that poor child, and when morning dawned it was still at rest, and there was no more work to do, no more tears to shed, and GOD himself had wiped away every tear from its eyes for ever! But that was a great trial—I am speaking of little things, of casual interpositions, which seem misadventures and hindrances at the moment, but which turn out to be heaven-sent and heaven-appointed furtherances of our way. It was so in the present instance.

I had resolved on leaving home by an early coach, which passed L——t Inn, about two miles from my residence, that I might reach town in good time; but it so happened that every seat was occupied, and there was no alternative but to wait in patience for

its successor. At the moment one might have been inclined to view it as an inauspicious commencement of the undertaking: but in every case of disappointment it is a good rule to look to the end, and though that may not be always so distinctly seen on earth as it will be in heaven, yet I think as we proceed, and sometimes very soon, we receive intimations enough by the way to assure us that all is appointed in wisdom as well as in mercy. On the arrival of the next stage, there was ample room, and on taking my seat inside, I found only one gentleman, whom I knew by sight and name as a solicitor, of high character for all that was estimable and excellent, in a neighbouring town.

I do not suppose that he knew me, but though an Englishman is proverbially shy in the presence of strangers, it is not so much the case where two only are thrown together, and that too in the narrow compass of a stage coach, where, as Pope says,

"Tree nods to tree, each alley has its brother;"

and where two gentlemen are thrown into each other's society for some hours, the very jolting of the coach shakes them into companionship and conversation. The weather of course led the way: foreigners laugh at Englishmen, as if that was their only topic, but I really believe that, amid other blessings of our island-home, we owe much to our variable climate for this very convenient introduction

to more general conversation. Of course, when we tell another, or another tells us, that it is a fine, or a wet, or a warm, or a cold day, we are not communicating nor receiving information which we needed or did not already know; any more than when two friends meet in the morning, who separated only the night before, and with outstretched hand, and joyous smile, and eager, animated face, ask each other how they do, as if they could not read health and spirits beaming in every feature. It is simply the conventional *façon de parler*, which just clears the throat and paves the way for the more general topics which immediately take its place. The weather is in fact the mere handle that opens the door of conversation, and is understood as such: when I tell a man that it is raining hard, as we are both looking out of a coach or railway-carriage window, and as we mutually see umbrellas meeting us at every turn, and mackintoshes and oil-skin capes streaming down with wet, I am not intending to enlighten his ignorance, nor does he rebuke me for ill-timed and unnecessary intelligence, but he courteously assents to and reiterates the remark; and thus we gradually slide away from the weather, and enter, as it were, into the very centre of the room—*in medias res*.

I am inclined to think too that there was a freemasonry of spirit and cordiality interchanged between travellers in the old coaching days, which one scarcely sees or expects now. I should as soon think

of stopping to exchange salutations, or trying to strike up a conversation with a casual passenger on the pavement of Cheapside, or in Pall Mall and Regent Street, as in the crowded, bustling, hurrying, ever-changing, fleeting, fugitive passengers in a railway carriage. The quartetto of a coach was in reality a little family party, a sort of household arrangement in which all the little courtesies and civilities of domestic life could be developed on a small scale—where familiarity belied its proverb, and did not breed contempt—where one handed out occasionally a fair partner to breakfast, or dinner, or whatever the meal might be, with somewhat of the gallantry of an old beau; and where too, as the darkness of night stole over the scene, and shrouded the operation in mystery, each secretly and by stealth enveloped their heads in a night-cap, and snored away to their heart's content without scruple or remorse.

One does not, of course, wish for coaching days to return, for with all its appliances and perfection, it had its miseries; but still it had also much of that family coziness and snugness, and that more elaborate courtesy of the old school, with occasionally its jovial interchange of song and jest and anecdote with the guard or coachman, which are ill-supplied by the screams and whistles of the present Charons of the engine, while even the little *désagrémens* and *contretemps* of a road-side afforded subjects of good-humoured mirth and jocularity. Not unfrequently, too,

were these journeys, whether on the inside or the outside, rendered seasonable—some may perhaps say unseasonable—vehicles of instruction to fellow-travellers, and many a time has the pocket Bible of some earnest man of GOD been drawn forth, and an appropriate text of Scripture read, aye and listened to with approval and delight; and many a tract has been distributed and carried home by some casual recipient of the truth, and the bread cast upon the waters has been found again after many days, not perhaps of him who cast it there, but of those who carried the seed unconsciously with them, and there it grew, they knew not how, till perhaps something brought to their remembrance the long-past journey, and the godly Philip who had joined them on it, and they have gratefully acknowledged of the word spoken in season, how good it was!

As Mr. Kirkman and myself then sat opposite to each other, we soon drifted into that easy, pleasant conversation, which, like the motion of our coach, whirled us onwards imperceptibly into more intimate communication, till I found myself detailing to him at some length the whole case which was now carrying me up to town. It was no breach of confidence as regarded the parties, nor was it any premeditated policy as regarded myself; it was simply out of the fulness of the heart the mouth spake. Poor Harry's image in his felon cell was before me—his widowed mother's image in her broken-hearted distress was

behind me—my own pledged undertaking to speak words of counsel and comfort to him was pressing heavily on my thoughts; and so, almost unconsciously, I found myself narrating with the earnestness of an advocate the present and the past of my poor client. I could see at once that I had deeply interested my listener, and at that moment the thought occurred to me, that, before I gave, I had better take counsel myself, and I therefore added,

"I do not think the poor boy altogether guiltless, even of this offence, nor that the law has unjustly laid her hands upon him, so as to render him amenable to the charge; but I do believe that he has been thoughtlessly entrapped into that complicity which makes him liable, and that he has been a cat's-paw in the hands of an old and more experienced offender, to enable him to carry out his plans."

"In all probability it is so," said my fellow-traveller, "but it will require some careful sifting of the matter to ascertain the respective degrees of innocence and guilt in the parties, and some legal experience too, I must add, to put this case in its proper light before a jury, for of course the poor boy must stand his trial. And though I do not go to the extent of saying, as some people do, that at the Old Bailey acquittal and condemnation go very much on the see-saw principle, and that if A. B. is condemned, it is C. D.'s turn to be acquitted, and so on; yet with the majority of those that are tried there, it is

see Harry Carsdell first, and afterwards meet Mr. Kirkman at his agents', to accompany him to the prison.

CHAPTER VIII.

I AM not writing merely to "adorn a tale," and therefore shall not stop to describe the gloomy horrors of the prison to which my steps were directed on the morning after my arrival. Its dark and sullen exterior is known to most; and its name is so associated with our earliest recollections of the crimes, the atrocities, and the expiations of human guilt, that few feel not a sort of shudder as they look up at its dark, unbroken, unrelieved extent of wall, on which seems to have gathered all the accumulated dirt of years, and to have remained there as a fitting emblem of the pollution of its interior. It has not indeed Dante's motto written over its massive doors,

"Lasciate ogni esperanza, voi ch' intrate,"

and though no one can help thinking with what gloomy forebodings many a one must have entered beneath its portals, yet even Newgate is tinted with some of the purest and sweetest hues of Christian sympathy that have ever lightened the dark side of human life. And as I have passed along its space, I

have pictured to my mind's eye the Christian philanthropist, aye and heroine of *her* day, as Florence Nightingale is of *ours*, with undaunted courage and unwearied patience, with unexhausted love, and faith that rose triumphant above every trial, moving, like a guardian angel, amid the worst outcasts of her sex, and, with a purity that remained unsoiled in the very thickest of pollution, just laying her finger on the one nerve that still thrilled with human feeling, and, after the holy example of the Lord she loved, plucking the very brands out of the burning, and winning souls to penitence and Christ! I think that no one has a right to speak, or write, or think disparagingly of human nature or woman's love, who has in the space of one life seen and known Elizabeth Fry and Florence Nightingale.—However,

The few preliminary proceedings on the admission of every visitant being despatched, a turnkey was commissioned to conduct me to Harry Carsdell's room or cell. There is, of course, some distinction between a prisoner for trial and a prisoner after conviction; and I suppose the former is expected to be grateful for his higher privileges. As a stranger, however, and a visitant for the first time, I shuddered as I pursued the darkened path; but, oh! the sickening and sinking feeling of the heart with which I entered the cell, where Harry was sitting on the edge of the miserable pallet that was called his bed. Every scene

of his young life rushed like a hurricane through one's memory—how I had held him in my arms as a babe, had "received him into the congregation of Christ's flock," had "signed him with the sign of the cross," and had prayed for him, that he might have "power and strength to triumph against the devil, the world, and the flesh,"—the evening, too, of his father's death, and that touching passage of Scripture which the dying man had read, and then closed his eyes for ever,—his mother's anguish in her first burst of grief at the tidings of her son's shame,—my own really earnest affection for the youth and disappointed hopes, and the solemn words of counsel with which we had parted, when he came up to London,—all these crowding and conflicting emotions choked my very utterance, and I only sobbed.

Poor Harry either guessed or saw who it was; he might at the moment have thought or feared it was his mother, but he knew it could not be her, for her arms would have been around his neck, and her tears wetting his cheeks, ere a word had been spoken; and who else but the friend and pastor of his earliest days could or would have followed him to this abode of shame? A few moments however recovered the emotion, and, recurring to our last interview, I said,

"Oh, Harry! how could you forget those words which I bade you fasten around your neck, and engrave upon your heart, 'How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?' Did I not tell

you to bear them with you in every scene, and repeat them in every temptation? Alas! alas! my poor boy, you have fallen sadly."

"Oh, spare me, spare me, sir," was his reply. "I am indeed guilty,—leave me to my fate."

"No, Harry, that I will not. I have come, not to rebuke, but to reclaim; not to condemn, but to comfort. I come, charged with all the yearnings of a mother's love over you; the iron has indeed entered deeply into her soul, but she still looks to you with all the fondness she ever did, and has bidden me to say far more than perhaps she could have uttered herself. She has, moreover, sent you the assurance of her forgiving love, under her own hand. And I am here, in her name as well as in my own, to speak words of peace to you; and if, Henry, I probe the sore too deep, it is to heal, and not to wound. But you must lay open to me all your heart, as you once used to do; there must be no concealments, no evasions. How then, I again ask, could you do this great wickedness, and sin against GOD? Of course, it is your sin against man that has brought you here; man's law protects only its own, and because you have wronged, or are supposed to have wronged, your fellow-man, the law brings you into jeopardy. But I have taught you, Harry, to look up to One higher than man, against whom your sin has been committed. I know not that you will find mercy at man's bar, where you must soon stand, but I know that the

forgiveness they may deny will be granted of GOD. It is to Him first, I say, humble yourself and confess all your sin."

The unhappy youth had never risen from the pallet on which he was sitting when I entered his cell; his elbows were resting on his knees, and his face buried in his hands. I could see, even in the dim light, that his frame shook almost convulsively, and still more plainly could I hear the choking sobs. When I ceased to speak, for the first time he raised his swollen eyes to mine, his lips quivered, and agony seemed throbbing in every vein. In one instant he rose from the posture in which he was, and, throwing himself on his knees, exclaimed in bursting sobs, while the tears gushed uncontrolled—

"I have sinned against heaven, and before thee! Father, forgive me; for I knew not what I did!"

It was a sad and painful sight to see the poor boy —once a child of hope, and even now, even still one— in this hour of desolation, in his prisoned cell, uttering in gasping broken accents the language of convicted sin. It was however the very point to which I had sought to bring him; it was the very feeling I had prayed of GOD to grant—the broken and the contrite heart, which His Spirit alone could give. I did not, for indeed I could not, answer, but I sunk on my knees by his side, and though for a few moments utterance was denied, yet as our tears flowed together, I felt that even in them there was the fulness and

sympathy of prayer. A few words sufficed—and his own prayer, so simple, so scriptural, so expressive and true, "Father, forgive me, for I knew not what I did," had given the key-note, and we arose from our knees in a calmer, aye, and even a happier frame.

"My poor mother, sir," was his first question, "how does she bear it?"

"Ah! Harry," I answered, "you had forgotten her when you fell into this sin; but she has not forgotten you, and she still hopes that you may be a blessing to her old age, and that instead of bringing her grey hairs with sorrow to the grave, your hands will close her eyes, and she may die blessing and thanking GOD for your love!"

I then told Henry of Mr. Kirkman's kind proposal of the preceding day, and of his intended visit, and urged upon him the necessity of openly and explicitly detailing to him, as far as he could, every circumstance connected with the offence with which he was charged.

It was a melancholy story of weakness, temptation, and sin; the annals of youth's ruin record no doubt many as sad, and many a parent's heart in secret has mourned over shipwrecks of ruined hopes and blighted prospects, amid the temptations of an university, as in the scenes of the metropolis. At college or behind a counter, in the theatre or on the race-course, in the families of the aristocracy or the middling classes, the shore is alike strewed with the wrecks

which have been drawn into the vortex of dissipation and pleasure, and there utterly perished.

Mr. Birch, it may be remembered, had already hinted at an inmate of Messrs. Mercers, of questionable character and expensive habits, with whom Harry had incautiously contracted great intimacy. This young man, whom we will call Jasper Smith, as being furthest removed from his real name, was a peculiarly shrewd, intelligent young man, with good looks, popular manners, and high animal spirits, and a great favourite both with his employers, their customers, and his companions. Great confidence had been consequently reposed in him, but unhappily his propensity for pleasure soon led him to spend his leisure hours in scenes wherever it could be found; and pleasure, like the horse-leech, that is never satisfied, keeps crying, "Give, give." The theatre, the nightly saloon, and places of similar resort, and the habits induced in and by them, and the acquaintances made and the connexions formed there, soon produced the inevitable result, and Jasper discovered that he must either discontinue his pleasures, or find means for their indulgence. To the first he was by no means inclined, and the latter was not so easy to effect as he supposed; for though great confidence was reposed in him, still there was one continuous check running throughout the whole system, which almost rendered embezzlement impossible, or rather detection immediate. Jasper's shrewd intellect however suggested

a plan, but in order to carry it out an accomplice was necessary, or one at least whom he might lure to be an unconscious abettor of his purpose.

It was just at this juncture that Harry Carsdell joined the establishment, and his simplicity, perhaps it may have been a splash of rusticity in his character, his inexperience of London ways and life, and above all, his evident good-nature, soon pointed him out as one who might be won to his purpose. Jasper's quick insight into character soon detected his companion's easiness of temper and shrinking from ridicule, and with such materials to work on he was not long in moulding his victim to his designs. His first step was gradually to lead him to the scenes he himself frequented. Unhappily the theatre, though so open and avowed a school of profligacy and vice, was in those days looked upon as the natural and appropriate place of amusement for young and old, and from their earliest years, parents, without scruple, or thought of wrong, or suspicion of taint, would take their children to the play as a matter of course. Holidays were hardly holidays, unless so many evenings were devoted to the theatre; and a father was content, and a mother satisfied, if they could carry their young ones, sons and daughters alike, through the mazes of flaunting and unabashed sin that hemmed them in on every side, that assailed them in the porticoes and on every step without, and met them in every passage and staircase within,

without positive insult, bidding them ask no questions, and if possible see no sights and hear no words, till they were safely lodged in the box provided for them, or once more securely housed at home; little dreaming that the taste and the habit would survive to later years, when without restraint or control they would roam at will amid its demoralizing scenes and fatal consequences. Few in that day, I do not say had the courage, but even thought it necessary to speak discouragingly or disapprovingly of the theatre, as a school of morals; and when a visit to it was first proposed, Harry heard no warning voice, no scruple started, no hint of wrong suggested; and one can hardly wonder that the admonitions of his village-home and the counsels of his village-pastor were treated by his present advisers as the one-sided, narrow-minded nonsense of rustic moralists, unfit for a London atmosphere, and out of place with London habits and privileges. Unhappily Harry argued when he should have prayed, and himself a stripling, found himself no match for the veteran Satan.

It is however needless to pursue this detail; it led to its natural and foreseen consequences. Jasper soon lured his victim into other scenes, and though Harry's limited means in no degree allowed of the outlay it entailed, it was part of Jasper's plan to make his dupe dependent on him, as well as keep him in his power by advances from time to time, for the very expenses he himself encouraged. I do not pre-

tend to know the methods by which Smith was enabled to defraud his employers; but as far as I could understand it from Harry's statement, every salesman in such houses is obliged to submit each bill of each portion of goods he sells to a brother shopman, to check and countersign; and, thus checked and countersigned, he hands it and the proceeds over to the cashier. Jasper, as I have said, was a popular and successful salesman; and he so contrived that Harry Carsdell should always countersign his bills, and thus in every bill he was enabled to defraud to a certain extent, by keeping back from the bill presented for counter-signature a portion of the goods sold, and appropriating that amount to his own use. I believe Henry was totally ignorant of this fraud; he knew indeed that his friend and companion always had ample means for his own pleasures, and for Harry's too: but a fond mother, a kind aunt, a well-to-do uncle, a country cousin living on his means, and who had just come up to town, were always at hand to explain away or account for the supply, which was always ready, and never seemed to fail.

Of course, there are periods in every house of business when the process of what is called "stock-taking" is gone through, and then the deficiency of goods was clearly ascertained, against which no proceeds were forthcoming: and though the discovery of the deficiency led to no immediate detection, it did lead to inquiry, to investigation, to suspicion, to

watching, and finally to discovery; and as Harry's intimacy with the party was well known, and his signature to the bills acknowledged, it was of almost unavoidable necessity that he should be included in the same charge.

Such was, in its more general features, the character of the case, which Mr. Kirkman and myself elicited in our interview with Henry. There was some natural and ingenuous reluctance of youthful and innate delicacy still within, which rendered him averse to dwelling on much of the past; nor did one feel inclined to blame the feeling which prompted him to speak tenderly of his companion in sin; and he was no doubt correct in imputing a very large portion of the blame to himself, and of its present consequences to his own folly and imprudence. Upon the whole, one could not but indulge the hope that the case, if fairly represented and laid before a jury, with the evident kind feelings towards him on the part of the prosecutor, and the strong testimony which both myself and his former employer, Mr. Birch, could give to his excellent principles and character, would all tell in his favour, and end probably in acquittal, and we therefore left him with a lighter heart and more assured hope.

Mr. Kirkman had taken notes of every statement Henry had made, and promised to draw up a brief, which he would leave with his agents; and again assuring me of their ready willingness to aid in this

labour of love, in extricating the poor boy from the snare in which he had been entrapped, bade me adieu.

CHAPTER IX.

THE day of trial soon came, and poor Harry stood at the bar of human judicature. His companion, Jasper Smith, was by his side; they had never met, at least never spoken, since the day of their commitment for trial, till they now once more stood side by side at the bar of the Old Bailey. There was a striking contrast between the two. I do not say there was any hardened expression, or daring defiance, or reckless indifference, in the look of his associate —far from it; there was nothing to offend, nothing to displease and disapprove; but there was a calm, quiet, collected manner, an earnest attention to the business that was going on, as if determined to throw away no chance, and a manifest desire to gain, by his respectful and gentlemanly demeanour, an interest in the feelings of those in whose hands his fate rested. On his first approaching Harry, he immediately held out his hand to him, and whispered a few words, the purport of which were of course not heard by any, and then he turned round and bowed respectfully to the court and to the jury.

It is at all times a sad and painful sight to see prisoners on their trial; and perhaps human depravity never assumes a more repulsive form than in the prisons and courts of justice in the metropolis, where every degree of vice meets and appals the eye, from the urchin whose head scarce appears above the bar, to the desperate and reckless offender of practised guilt, whose years, if counted indeed by the tale of nature, would still be few, but if registered by the course of crime, would long since have completed their span. At times too, and alas! far too often,—for Satan has no exclusive partialities for classes,—he spreads his net, not in the loathsome purlieus of low abandoned vice,—for why should he spend toil and time on those who are already his?—but in the counting-house of the merchant, in the office and chamber of the lawyer, on the Stock Exchange, and in the banking-house. Wherever a soul is to be snared, there Satan plies his trade, and lays his choicest wiles, as if there were but that one soul to ruin, and he had nothing else to do but ruin that soul. So at times there stands, amid the usually heartless crew of Old Bailey criminals, some nobler fallen one, over whom angels may weep, though earthly friends may stand aloof—some splendid argosy of richer fortunes and brighter hopes, over whose wreck we stand aghast, as we think with what pomp and pride and pageantry it once spread its sails and rode exultingly on the waters—some one,

perchance, like him of old who once companied with holy men of GOD, with Paul and apostles, and found delight in the ways of godliness, but who, alas! in evil hour and with sad infirmity of purpose, hath turned aside and coveted after riches, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows,—or, it may be, as on this day, some youth of ingenuous shame, the burning blush on whose cheek hides the pale sickliness of long confinement and an anguished heart, and whose throbbing bosom beats with intenser agony as he escapes from the ribald jest and sarcastic sneers of more hardened criminals.

Such was poor Harry Carsdell. He stood among them, but not of them, and the practised eye could at once detect the feverish glow of shame, and the restless, anxious look of inexperience and terror, from the bold front and reckless demeanour of unabashed guilt; and there was an almost general feeling of pity mingled with surprise, as the spectators gazed on one who evidently stood there for the first time, and on whose brow guilt had as yet left no brand. Most of my readers perhaps know the preliminary proceedings of a court of justice—the calling over, the challenging, and then the swearing in of the jury; the reading of the indictment; and then the question addressed to the prisoner, "How say you, Henry Carsdell, are you guilty or not guilty?" To the first proceedings Henry paid little or no attention; he had probably never seen, nor heard the

name of any one of the men who were enclosed in the jury-box; they too, in equal probability, had never seen nor heard of his name; and even if he had understood his privilege, it was of little consequence to him to exchange A. B. for C. D., or C. D. for E. F., and he was therefore altogether silent, and looked on in amazement.

Not so, however, his companion by his side: with perfect self-possession, with a most deferential bow to the jury-box, with a voice musically clear and distinct, when the privilege of challenge was announced to him, as the names were called and sworn, he declared that he had no objection to any gentleman who might be summoned, and that he could leave his case with undiminished confidence in the hands of any English jury. It was, perhaps, overdone, and the older and more experienced officers of the court might have felt it so; but still it had its effect, and especially on that class whom it was meant to influence. When, however, the question, "How say you, guilty or not guilty?" was addressed to Henry, it was necessary that he should answer, and the jailer behind at once whispered to him, "Not guilty."

Many and many a time have I heard that question asked of a poor prisoner at the bar, and I have more than once heard the touching confession of convicted sin wrung from an overburdened conscience in the acknowledgment of "Guilty," and the kind and merciful interposition of the judge to persuade the

hapless culprit to retract his plea, and record the mockery of a falsehood. It is so much, in intention at least, an act of mercy, founded on such humane motives, and so full of charity in its spirit, and it has been so immemorially part and parcel of our judicial system, that one feels almost a sort of reverential awe in condemning the practice. But I confess I have ever wished the necessity were obviated by some mode more in unison with the apostolic injunction which forbiddeth to do evil that good may come, something different from that which now calls upon a prisoner either to condemn himself, or to shelter his guilt beneath the mantle of a lie; or if he does neither, and holds his tongue, punishes him for his very silence.

There is an absurdity too in the system, which, if it were not so hallowed and crusted over by antiquity, would at once strike any impartial spectator. If a prisoner plead guilty, he is instantly besought to retract his plea, that he may have the chances of the glorious uncertainty of the law, that some flaw may be detected to quash the indictment, or the evidence break down and fail; but then, when, in compliance with the judge's request, he has declared himself "not guilty," then, all together, attorney and counsel, prosecutor and witness, one might almost add judge and jury, set to work at once, tooth and nail, to prove that he is, what he at first declared himself to be, a guilty man. And if, as in ninety-nine cases

out of an hundred, he pleads "Not guilty," who believes him, or who acts upon his assertion? The spirit of our law concludes every man innocent till he is proved guilty; the spirit of our law requires no man to condemn himself, and is so scrupulously humane upon this very point, that it always warns its prisoner, and even a witness, against incautious and inadvertent admissions, and forbids her constables and policemen to entrap a prisoner into unwary observations; and yet, with strange inconsistency, the very first question she herself puts to that prisoner is, "Are you guilty?"

"Oh, but," says Law, "we do n't wish him to admit his guilt; we beg him not to do any such foolish thing; we entreat him to say, 'he is not guilty;' we place an officer at his back to prompt him, and put the very words into his mouth, and answer, 'Not guilty.'"

"But," says the prisoner, "if I plead 'Not guilty,' will you believe me and let me go?"

"Certainly not, my good man," answers Law, "we 'll believe no such thing; in fact we are pretty sure it 's a lie:" and then she bids her crier call aloud in open court, for all persons who have any knowledge of the prisoner's misdeeds, larcenies, felonies, misdemeanours, and what not, to come forward and prove that the very plea she herself has put into his mouth is a falsehood!

"Well then," rejoins the prisoner, "I will hold

my tongue altogether, and plead neither one nor t'other."

"Will you, sirrah!" sternly replies Law: "a century ago, I would have ordered you to be pressed to death for your obstinacy; and as it is, I will instantly empannel a jury, will ye, or nill ye, to ascertain if your silence proceeds from the visitation of GOD, or your own perverse will; and depend upon it, in either case, I will keep you in custody till we find your tongue;" and then, *sotto voce*, adds, "you 'd better be a good boy, and tell the lie at once."

But the absurdity of these preliminary proceedings is not yet over; the very next question is, "How will you be tried?" as if the prisoner had the slightest voice in the matter; and to show that he has not, the answer is ready cut and dried for every prisoner alike, the pickpocket, the petty larcener, the burglar, the incendiary, the murderer, the poisoner; the same Procrustian answer suits all shapes and sizes; every prisoner is supposed to have but one heart and one mind in the matter, and all are alike instructed to reply, "BY GOD AND MY COUNTRY," the two last tribunals before which a guilty man would wish to appear, and the *first* of which the Law has already counselled and instructed him to insult, by recording a lie in His presence. When such a question is asked, common sense would suppose that a choice was given, a selection allowed, a preference permitted —but no such thing; like a man, of whom I have

heard, who, once asking a friend to dinner, wrote, "Name your own hour, but say four o'clock;" so the poor prisoner at the bar, though courteously and civilly asked how he wishes to be tried, has no more power to select any other tribunal than that which is actually arrayed against him, in all its solemnity, at the very moment the question is asked. I can imagine—I do n't say I ever heard it—but I can imagine a very timid—or, it may be, a very impudent prisoner, on the question being proposed to him, looking up with grave face to the judge on the bench, and saying, "My Lord, I objects to that there wig of yours,—it daunts me so, I can't collect my senses while I sees it straight afore me. I prefer, as your Lordship offers me the choice, to be tried without the wig." The fact is, these preliminary proceedings and questions are both an absurdity and a nonentity, are felt to be so, are no sooner asked than pushed on one side, and law and justice just takes its own grave and dignified course, without the slightest after-reference or allusion to them. As a mere absurdity, they might stay or not; as a mockery, they are better away; as involving falsehood in so solemn an hour, and in so serious a matter as an appeal to GOD, the sooner they are expunged from our criminal code the better.*

* I once heard a murderer, in the court at Hereford, plead 'Guilty' to the indictment, and I do not know that I ever witnessed a more painful or striking instance of an overburdened conscience

It might have been a questionable point, under other circumstances, whether Harry should plead

and a broken heart. As far as I recollect the case, it was for the murder of an ostler at an inn in Ledbury, in the year 1816, or thereabouts. The murderer was a poor tramper, who had entered the inn-yard late one evening, to beg permission to lie all night in the hay-loft or stable. It was, I believe, contrary to orders; but the ostler, taking compassion on the poor way-worn traveller, consented to his request, telling him that he should have to get up to brew at four o'clock on the following morning, and he would then call him, and he must go away, as if it were known that he had permitted him to pass the night on the premises, he should lose his place. To this the man readily agreed, and was accordingly stowed away in a hay-loft, unknown to any one save the ostler, who in the course of the evening brought him some food, and then left him. The next morning at the appointed hour he called him, and bade him make haste and get away. In a few minutes the poor traveller descended the hay-loft ladder, and went to thank his benefactor, ere he departed. The ostler was stooping down before the copper fire-place, putting in some wood, which he had just split, and the axe with which he had split it was lying behind him. In an instant the tramper stole behind him, seized the axe, and with one blow on the back of his head laid him a corpse. He searched his pockets, but found only four-pence, which he took, and then stole away in the darkness, unknown and unnoticed by any human being. Of course the murdered man was found, but the body was almost cold, the blood was clotted on his hair, and head, and neck, and there was not the slightest clue to the perpetrator of the deed. No one had seen the tramper on the preceding evening—no one was aware that such a man had been on the premises—no one had seen him depart, and he was some miles from the place before even the murder was discovered; and as he had taken nothing from the person but four-pence in copper money, nothing could have been found on him to give rise to suspicion, far less to detection. And so, in all human probability, the murderer never would have been discovered, till that day which shall disclose so many mysterious deaths. The coroner's inquest stated all that was known or likely to be known, that the poor man had been murdered "by some person or persons unknown." But the murderer carried an avenger

guilty or not guilty. I knew that, in the eye of God, he was guilty. He deeply felt it and bewailed it himself; but as regarded man, one could hardly help feeling that he had been more sinned against than sinning. When his turn of trial came, and his name was repeated by the officer, and the poor lad had to take his station in front of the dock, exposed to the gaze of a heartless crowd, indifferent to everything but how far the detail of crime might administer to curiosity, or worse cravings, the burning hue forsook his cheeks, an instant paleness overspread

with him, which gave him no rest by night nor by day. Wherever he tramped by day, the figure of the murdered man tramped by his side; wherever he lay down at night, he was still there; and within one month, I believe, or little more, the murderer retraced his steps to Ledbury, and gave himself up to justice.

I heard his trial; or rather, I was present when he was arraigned, pleaded guilty, and was sentenced to death. I never saw so sad a countenance, so sorrow-stricken a man, so bowed, and bent, and worn by conscience. I never heard so melancholy a voice as that with which he pleaded guilty, and entreated for himself that he might die. The judge, Mr. Justice Burrough, besought him to retract his plea, but he only shook his head and refused. I do not think there were many in that crowded court whose eyes were not filled with tears.

He was no murderer in heart, though he was in deed; he never could account for the sudden impulse and instigation which prompted him to the act. He had gone solely and purposely to thank his benefactor for his kindness to him, and the thought of such a deed had never entered his mind, till he saw the axe before him, and his victim stooping down. One could only account for it in the technical language of the indictment, that it was "by instigation of the devil." But the question which this incident so prominently enforces is, "Could such a man as this have pleaded 'Not guilty'?"

his features, and the cold drops of sweat stood upon his brow: his eyes swam, his tongue refused to speak, and for a moment or two he seemed lost to every sense. The name again rung upon his ear, and to the question asked in such a careless, heedless tone, the wretched boy gasped out, almost inaudibly, the faltering reply, "Not guilty." The aspect and demeanour of the youth, so utterly at variance with the usual exhibitions of the place, and so strikingly contrasted too with the calm self-possession of him that stood by his side, made a deep impression in his favour on many, and especially on the mind of the judge who was to try him, and he spoke a few kind and gentle words to the lad to reässure him.

This judge was one whose loving heart, almost womanly in its tenderness, was ever ready in every relation of life, at the bar, on the bench, in his own household, in the wider range of the world, to yearn in pity and compassion over the sufferings and sorrows of those with whom he came in contact, or who in any way were brought to his notice. But especially did his heart gush forth in tenderness to the young, and never was he so happy as when he was seeking out and gathering around him a band of young men, in whose welfare he would take the liveliest interest, and devote the most unwearied efforts, by example, by paternal counsel, by correspondence, even in the midst of all his labours, and unbounded liberality, to promote their views, and guide them to all that was

virtuous and honourable and estimable among men, and holy before God. Without a shadow of suspicion in his own heart, giving up that heart fully and unreservedly to every labour of love that was brought before him, and with a philanthropy that never tired, but only seemed to grow by what it fed on, there never lived a man whose benevolence, affection, humanity, and every kindred virtue, were so entirely based on Gospel principles, and the model of his Saviour's love, who "went about doing good," and who, while he abhorred and would palliate no sin, yet yearned over the sinner with intensest love, and would spare no pains and leave no means untried to win him back to penitence and God. Even when stern duty on the bench imposed the painful task of condemnation, his faltering accents and broken voice would evidence the feelings of his heart, and as he spoke of Him who despises not the sighing of the contrite, and directed a miserable fellow-being to that Saviour whose blood alone cleanseth from all sin, and with whom that mercy, denied on earth, might yet be found by all who sought it, tears not unfrequently would stream down his aged cheeks, and evince the tenderness of the Christian's heart. Never did any criminal depart from his presence, whether in acquittal or condemnation, without some token of Christian love, some evidence of earnest anxiety for his soul, some admonition and godly precept to be treasured up and valued in after-life;

and I could not but deem that country blessed whose judges so tempered the severity of the law with the mildest dictates of the gospel of love and peace.*

In the days of which I am writing, among other anomalies of the law, and perhaps the most gratuitously harsh of any, was that which allowed indeed an advocate to a prisoner, but debarred him from speaking in his favour; and which, with much pretentious display of humanity, allowed a prisoner to speak for himself, while in ninety-nine cases out of every hundred, it well knew that he could not put two consecutive sentences together, and was utterly unfitted to unravel evidence, or explain conflicting or condemning circumstances, and in every case, from

* It is a melancholy but gratifying tribute to the memory of one deeply loved and honoured in life, to add, that the above is a slight sketch of one to whom the writer, with so many others of his own day, owes so much—the late Sir James Allan Park, of the Common Pleas. It is indeed but a poor offering to strew over the grave of one so beloved by those who knew him best; and much indeed does he regret that no abler memorial, no "Memoirs of his Life," such as those his own pen sketched of William Stevens, Esq., have yet been permitted to appear, and that neither sons nor sons-in-law have contributed a biography of one so eminently deserving to be embalmed in the memory of all good men, and have apparently forgotten his own favourite quotation from his favourite author, Owen Felltham, that "he who desires that the table of his life may be fair, will be careful to propose to himself the best examples, and will never be content, till he equals or excels them."

His saltem accumulem donis, hoc fungar inani
Munere.

inexperience, was quite sure to do himself more harm than good by availing himself of the privilege allowed him. However, in the present instance there was happily but little need of the indulgence. Poor Harry's silence was far more eloquent than any speech could have been, even under the most favourable aspect. The kind and able exertions of Mr. Kirkman and his agents, whose names, as he justly surmised, told volumes in his favour—the lenient and almost palliative explanations of the prosecutors as to Henry's unconscious implication in the embezzlement, and the very high testimony borne to his previous character, all had its due weight and influence, and, with but brief deliberation, the jury returned a verdict of acquittal of Henry Carsdell, while his associate, Jasper Smith, was brought in 'Guilty.' He probably from the very first had never expected otherwise—nay, perhaps, in his heart had hardly wished it, conscious that in this country, with a sullied character and a blighted name, he could hardly expect to recover his lost position, while in another hemisphere he might hope to regain that chance he had so foolishly thrown away here. And I must do him the justice to say, that in the few words he whispered to Harry on their meeting in the dock, he bade him cheer up, for he would confess all and exculpate him, rather than any harm should come to him.

I shall not have occasion to mention Jasper Smith again; yet his eventual fortunes, contrasted with

those of his companion—the acquitted and the condemned one, the innocent and the guilty—have often caused me to muse with silent wonder on the mysterious dealings of Providence; not indeed to arraign or question their justice, their wisdom, or their mercy, but to bow in silent acquiescence and adoration of His work, whose way is in the deep waters, and whose purposes are so often far beyond the reach of our scanty sight. A very short time elapsed before Jasper's talents, quick intelligence, active habits, and correct conduct brought him into higher notice and employment than that of a mere convict in a penal settlement; and he gradually kept raising himself in the general estimation, till at length a free pardon was granted him, and he then commenced business on his own account. He is now an affluent and influential member of society; years have blotted out the memory of his crime, wealth has secured its usual golden opinions from all, and he now himself, as a magistrate in the colony, deals out that justice to others, to which he himself was once amenable; while poor Harry Carsdell, his victim and his dupe, lies in a dishonoured grave. The one may date his ruin from the day of his acquittal, the other his prosperity from the hour when a jury of his country pronounced him guilty of dishonesty and fraud. I believe life's annals could reveal many and many similar instances of inequality; I believe that from the days of Asaph, aye, and far antecedent to his

days, down to the present moment, the Lord in His inscrutable providence has permitted the way of the wicked to prosper, and that, as Job says, "One dieth in his full strength, being wholly at ease and quiet; and another dieth in the bitterness of his soul."

CHAPTER X.

In the first burst of gratitude and joy at Henry's deliverance, one took little into account the difficulties of the future. Acquittal of a sad and grievous crime, discharge from a polluting and degrading imprisonment, restoration to his widowed mother's arms, were so prominently uppermost in one's mind, that at the moment one had little time, or perhaps even inclination, to ask oneself the question, what was to be done with the youth. The first evening was devoted by Harry to writing to his mother and to Mr. Kirkman, to offer his grateful thanks for his zealous and disinterested kindness, which had so materially contributed to the present successful result. The following morning I accompanied Harry to Mr. Kirkman's agents in Lincoln's Inn, to offer to them the same tribute of grateful acknowledgment for their kindness and exertions. His mother had authorized me to liquidate any demands which the

trial might occasion, but, with generous forbearance, Messrs. A. would not accept a single penny beyond the mere repayment of costs out of pocket; and then turning to Harry, Mr. A. sen. said, with much solemn but affectionate kindness—

"Now, young man, do not forget what that good and excellent judge said to you before you left the bar, 'Go and sin no more, lest a worse thing happen unto thee.' You have been indeed acquitted of this charge by a jury of your country, and I think most properly; but there can be no doubt that you have been tampering with crime, and have run a fearful risk; there can be no doubt that you have allowed yourself to pass those boundaries, which no one ever went beyond without certainty of pollution, if not peril of destruction. It has been a rough lesson, but if you learn it aright, you may have cause to thank GOD for far more than yesterday's escape."

"I have had some anxious wakeful hours about Harry," I said; "I hardly know what to advise, or how to act with regard to him. He must, I suppose, return home; and yet with a stained character and a blotted name, among those who have known him from infancy, it will be a painful ordeal; and yet a continuance in London, even if it were possible, would be a more perilous one."

"By no means must he remain here," was Mr. A.'s reply: "his mother's home is the fittest place at present. He must do what he can to heal the wound he

has inflicted there. The world is a very harsh world, and a very sceptical one too as to the amendment of those who have once gone astray; and you must, young man, await in humility and patience your reädmission into the ranks of the employed and the trusted. You may see the finger of scorn pointed at you; you may hear the reproach and the sneer of the unkind and the thoughtless thrown upon you; but it is part of the penalty which the world and society exact from those who violate its code. The law may and does often acquit; the world never does, and deals from its own hands that punishment which the law in its greater mercy has remitted."

There was indeed much wholesome though painful truth in these remarks; and though I trusted that the lesson had not been read in vain, and that he had already learnt in much bitterness of experience that the ways of sin are only ways of sorrow, and though I hoped that his course of guilty pleasure had been mercifully stopped almost in its very outset, before the heart had been deeply corrupted and alienated from the life and love of GOD, by long tarrying in forbidden paths, and that lengthened association with demoralizing habits which so blunts and deadens, and, as Burns calls it, so "petrifies" all moral perception and feeling; yet, in spite of all, hope was still blended with fear; snares, I knew, would beset him on every side, wherever he might go, and he had shown how little able he had been to resist,

and how prone and ready to yield to their enticements. I knew, too, that Satan never yet suffered a victim to escape his clutch without the most determined efforts to recapture his prey. Even the past, humbling as the remembrance of it might be supposed to be, rendered him, as Mr. A. justly observed, not merely a mark for the scorn of the ungodly, but the prey also and the aim of the worthless and the profligate. And, alas! I now felt how sadly the last two or three years had gradually stripped Harry of all that panoply of Christian armour, which can alone enable the stripling, or indeed the veteran either, to stand in the day of conflict. The sanctity of the Sabbath-day had been insensibly frittered away; the reading and love of the word of GOD, and communion with GOD in secret prayer, had been so irregularly practised, that at last the very form had ceased; and when these holy barriers were broken down, what was there, to use the language of Scripture, to hinder the boar out of the woods to enter in and waste, and the wild beast of the field to devour?—when religious habits had ceased to influence, what was to hinder irreligious ones from occupying their place?—when the tenement by its very emptiness invited occupation, who could wonder that Satan had entered in and dwelt there?

The circumstances of Harry's disgrace were well known in his native village; it was hopeless to attempt to conceal them, and Harry knew that it

was so, and I suspect would have gladly avoided at any risk and any sacrifice a return home. But what was to be done? Mr. Carsdell had indeed left his widow a small but still sufficient competency in a humble way; he had also provided for the premium of his son's apprenticeship to the trade which he had himself selected; but when, in evil hour, the village wheelwright was set on one side by the linen-draper of the county town, it involved not only a larger outlay at the moment, but necessitated a continually recurring expense in the appearance which Harry was expected to maintain in such a position. And then again, in his removal to London, and the expenditure which that not merely entailed, but enticed him to; and now, last of all, though comparatively trifling, owing to the kindness of others, the costs of his trial,—all materially dipped into the scanty funds which were at his mother's disposal; and the first result, evident to the world, was Mrs. Carsdell's second removal to a still humbler home than she had before occupied; and in fact the widow and her son were again reduced to the same position from which the father by his integrity and industry had raised himself. They now occupied a labourer's cottage, and though Mrs. Carsdell did not indeed go out to the more menial occupation of charing, yet she made it known that any work as a sempstress would be acceptable to her. As to Harry, he at first resolutely and earnestly sought employment in every place and

form he could think of; he applied to his former master, Mr. Birch, but though kind in manner and in speech, the refusal was decisive; he tried every tradesman in the town, and begged for the most menial occupation,—every door was closed. He next endeavoured to procure a situation in a gentleman's family, and I believe that with the aid of my recommendation he would have succeeded; but the other servants, with more pride and less Christian charity, resisted, and refused to associate with one who had stood in the felon's dock; and so that door too was barred and bolted against the youth, and he returned again to his mother's home, with an almost broken heart, to be a burden, if not a shame, to her.

I should be sorry to wrong a human being by any insinuations of an unkind or ungenerous character, nor indeed have I any very tangible grounds for doing so; but I could not help suspecting that Mr. Thomas Ball, the patron of the Chequers, was mainly instrumental in sustaining, feeding, and indeed aggravating all these unfavourable impressions against poor Harry. His itinerating habits which carried him so far and wide, his propensity to enter every public-house he came to, his love of gossip and scandal, which led him to make an ell out of every inch he could get hold of in the way of news,—perhaps a still rankling sense of fancied injury and wrong, and a malicious low-minded enjoyment of what he deemed a righteous retribution for not building up the fabric

of his own visionary expectations, and which, according to his own assertions and belief, if he had had the management of the lad, never would have befallen her,—all this combination of motives led Mr. Ball to make Mrs. Carsdell and her son's disgrace the usual topic of his conversation; and as his circle of acquaintance was extensive and not over-select, and as it is the propensity of news-mongering, like snow-balls, to gather substance as it rolls on, poor Harry's character was pretty well snow-*balled*, and black-*balled*, and foot-*balled*, wherever Mr. Ball's journeys led him. Harry bore up against this manfully and boldly at the first; he looked upon it as part of his punishment, which he was to expect; and his love for his mother, and his anxiety to save her from the knowledge of much that he encountered, and would otherwise have resented, but for the pain it would have given her, made him endure much and long.

There are however certain axioms in human life and human affairs, which, though not perhaps self-evident, are nevertheless unfailing; they may be, and often are, kicked at, scouted, resisted, disbelieved, but they are true, and founded on unerring truth; and one of them is, that as it is the undoubted bias of *much* to become *more*, so is it the necessary tendency of *little* to become *less* in the distribution of fortune's favours, as well as of spiritual gifts and graces. The wheel, which in its rapid revolutions only adds to the heap of the millionaire, as invariably scatters and

disperses and diminishes the scanty and insufficient store of the needy one. He may make desperate plunges to escape the ruin, but as one has often seen with a poor fly in a spider's web, how every struggle but draws those filmy meshes more inextricably around it, while its malicious gloating foe waits just aloof, watching every movement, and occasionally, as its victim lags in its agonies, putting forth its poisoned claw, and giving it here and there a prick and a poke, to stir it up to fresher struggles and more hopeless ruin; so does the poor victim of decaying fortunes try here and try there, engage in this and take to that, while each effort only takes from the little, and renders that little less. Or, as one sometimes sees a sickening bird in a cage descend from a higher perch, on which it used to sing its joyous notes, to a lower one, and there look sad and sorrowful, and on the morrow to the still lower one, with all its feathers ruffled up, and then shortly after one looks again and finds it stretched out dead at the bottom; so one sees some poor foot-ball of fortune gradually descending in the scale, surrendering this comfort and that, this memorial and that, even the wedding-ring with an unnoticed tear, till the last green leaf is gone, and all is desolate and bare.

It was pretty much in this way with Mrs. Carsdell and her son; her means had been seriously hampered by her exertions on behalf of Harry, and now that he was returned on her hands, and *his* subsistence as well

as her own had to be provided for out of the scanty fund, it no longer sufficed even for the moderate necessities of the two; and gradually article after article disappeared, the widow herself began to lose that neat and tidy appearance for which she had been always remarkable; and as to poor Henry, it was sad to see his haggard look, his melancholy gait, and his all but ragged attire. Every effort for employment was in vain, except as a day-labourer, and even for that he was in reality so ill-fitted that the remuneration offered was of the most niggard kind. Emigration in those days, save on Jasper Smith's terms, was scarcely ever dreamed of, except for those who had funds of their own to render it eligible; and I could almost have wished that he had enlisted as a soldier. It is possible that such a thought may have entered his own mind—but it would have broken his mother's heart, and perhaps therefore, if ever thought of, it was at once dismissed. This state of things continued for considerably more than a year, and though of course everything that kindness on one's own part could suggest to mitigate the painfulness of their situation was done, still there seemed an insuperable barrier against the only effectual kindness that could meet their need, that of procuring Henry constant and eligible employment.

I saw, too, that all this was tending to very distressing results as regarded the young man himself. How very soon does the loss of self-respect follow the

departure of all that is outwardly respectable! and as he saw himself repudiated by the good, and tolerated only by the disreputable, he seemed gradually to become callous and indifferent to the opinions of others. It was evidently an unequal conflict, the world against him and he against the world; and, as poor Brothers, the Bedlamite, said to one who asked him how one so apparently intelligent could get himself immured in such a place, "Oh! it was decided by votes; I thought the world mad, and the world thought me mad, and I was outvoted."

It soon became painfully evident that Harry Carsdell, humiliated and stung by the cold neglect of most, and goaded by the sneers and taunts of many, was drifting rapidly into the vortex of low and dissolute companionship, and that, in addition to all her previous sorrows, his mother had now to mourn with more agonizing fears than even for poverty itself. I tried indeed to stop this, but, alas! Harry had already learned to shun me; and we seldom, if ever, met. I would go at all, even the most unexpected hours, but he had some means of ascertaining my approach, so as to escape from the house before I could reach it; and my chief means of access to him was through the medium of his mother.

One day, however, I was returning home from a distant walk, and on turning suddenly into a lane leading to the village, I met Harry Carsdell almost face to face; and, to my vast surprise, he was in company, and

apparently in familiar intercourse, with no other a person than Mr. Thomas Ball, who, as far as I could judge from appearances, had been celebrating the treaty of peace, or the truce or suspension of hostilities, or whatever he might be pleased to term it, with all due respect to the beer-barrel. It was of course impossible to evade the meeting, and Mr. Ball, to do him justice, had certainly no scruples of delicacy or shyness to shun even the parson, especially when armed with an extra pot of courage; and therefore, taking his short dingy pipe from his mouth, he saluted me with that easy air of familiarity, which, though not meant to be rude, is perhaps the most repulsive of all from its very freedom. I was, however, too earnest on his companion's account to heed or regard the equality on which Mr. Ball at once put himself and me, and was even glad of the circumstance, in order that if it were possible I might extract from his inadvertent admissions some clue to Harry's present position, which both puzzled and pained me; so I simply returned his salutation, by hoping that he too was well, and reëchoing his opinion that it was a fine October day, and then added—

"You seem homeward bound, Mr. Ball, and if you 'll slacken pace a bit, I 'll walk with you; I have been long wishing to meet Harry Carsdell, whom I have n't seen for some time, and I am glad to have now fallen in with him."

I felt sure that if I had proposed a separation, and

that Harry should walk with me, while Mr. Ball wended home alone, Harry would have started some hindrance, and his associate would have come to his rescue by urging some pressing engagement, or some equally improbable impossibility. And I thought that the proposition to join company with both would not only put suspicion off its guard, but might lead to the very end I wanted of getting Harry alone. An intimacy between the two certainly betokened no good; and though perhaps one could not liken it to the interview between the wolf and the lamb at the brook-side, yet its result seemed as likely to issue in equal peril and destruction.

So I began by plunging at once *in medias res.*

"I was not aware, Henry," I said, "that you and Mr. Ball were intimates."

"Why you see, sir," rejoined Mr. Ball, without waiting for Harry to answer—"you see as how I could n't bear to see the young chap so run down and put upon; and I always had a liking for the lad, and would have taken him under my own instruction, like, when his poor father died, only his mother warn't agreeable."

"I am not *intimate* now with him," was Harry's quick retort,—"only he threw himself in my way, and as we were going the same road, we 've walked together, that 's all."

I was glad at this explanation, particularly as it seemed to imply a desire to repudiate all idea of

any intimacy between them; but Ball was not a man to be easily affronted, when he had an end in view, and so he said,

"In coorse, that 's just it, and, as I told the young man, I thought I could put a job or two in his way, that would be profitable to him, and was just about to explain the nature of it, when you came upon us."

"Well, Mr. Ball, do n't let my presence hinder you. You know we are told that, 'In the multitude of counsellors there is wisdom;' perhaps my counsel may be of use. Henry knows of old that I am his friend; and I think an old friend, such as I am, is not to be foolishly shaken off for a new one, such as you are."

"In coorse not, sir; but you know I travels about a deal, and meets with all sorts of customers and acquaintances, and I know some young chaps who are doing a goodish bit of business, quiet like, who would be glad of a partner who could write and keep accounts; and I was just going to mention it to Master Carsdell, but if he ain't agreeable to the job, there be others that are; at any rate, it can bide till I sees him again."

We had just then reached a style leading to a farm-house, and Ball, pleading business at it, immediately crossed and walked away, leaving Henry and myself in the lane alone. I was not sorry at the result, though I had perhaps expected a different one;

and as Harry and myself were now alone by what seemed almost a providential interposition, I determined to avail myself of it to the very uttermost of my power: and I immediately began—

"Harry, I am glad Ball has left us. I do not blame you for being with him, for you say your meeting was by accident, or rather, as he seemed to imply, he sought *you* out; but I have strange misgivings, wherever that man is concerned. I should have sad forebodings, if you got linked in with him. But, Harry, Harry, why have you so shunned me of late? I did not shun you in your hour of need, and the same earnest desire that led me then to your side to do you good, is the only motive that prompts me now; why then do you shun me? Do you doubt me, or do you fear me?"

"No, no, sir, I do n't doubt you, I could n't doubt you, for you have been the only friend that mother and myself have had during all this weariful time. Without you, I think we must have just laid down and died. No, sir, I do n't doubt you, I never did; but I do fear you."

"Fear me!" I broke in with; "why should you fear me? I never said a word of unkindness to you in your life."

"I know it, sir, and I do not fear your reproaches, for you never reproached me even in that worst matter; but I do fear to meet and to see you, for I know I am not what I ought to be and should be, and what

I think I might be, if I had but the chance given me; but you know I have never had one chance nor one trial since I came back; and I do feel a dislike to your seeing me going down and down deeper into the mire, and misery, and ruin—no one caring for me, no one helping me, no one willing to employ me, or give me a chance of redeeming myself: and there is my poor mother, too, pining away into the grave, and I knowing that I am the cause of it all! Oh! how I wish they had found me guilty, and sent me away at once from all this wretchedness. I was not guilty, I know, and you know it as well, and yet GOD punishes me as if I were. I am sure I may say, my punishment is greater than I can bear."

The poor lad poured out this with a volubility of grief and utterance which admitted of no interruption; and when he stopped, he burst into tears and sobbed violently. I was deeply affected, for there was much truth in what he said, and I could not gainsay it; but there was a bitterness also which, though it hardly surprised, yet deeply pained me. Man assuredly had visited his transgression with the heaviest rod, and his iniquity with the keenest stripes; and though it is true that in one sense man was but GOD's sword, yet I think the Lord must have said, as He looked on man's hard-heartedness, as he said once before, "I was but a little displeased, but you have helped forward the affliction;" or, as one might have supposed, the coward priest and the

selfish Levite passing by the torn and wounded and bleeding traveller, and leaving him to perish by the way. I could only answer,

"Oh! Harry, do n't speak reproachfully of GOD. He has not forsaken you, but perhaps you have forsaken Him. I never see you in GOD's house; I almost fear you have no communion with Him in your own chamber."

Whether the observation stung him from its truth, or that it just touched the rankling sore, I know not, but his reply was almost in the tone, if not the spirit, of fierceness.

"GOD's house, sir? what business have I there? it is man's house, and man's resort, and man would shrink from me even there, as from a leper or a plague-stricken wretch. I should expect to hear every man hissing his prayer in my ear, 'GOD, I thank thee I am not as Henry Carsdell.' No! I won't go there, as long as man occupies it, and thrusts me aside."

"But, Henry," I said, "man does not come into your own chamber,—there, you and GOD meet alone, —and though man despises, GOD has declared of Himself, that a broken and a contrite heart He will not despise."

"But I have not a broken and a contrite heart; I think I had at one time—at least I 'm sure I had very different feelings when I first came home; I was so anxious to prove that I was not the guilty

and degraded being men supposed me to be, I would have submitted to any humiliation, any penance, to have been permitted to redeem my character—to have seen but any glimpse, however distant, of recovery; but from the first hour to this it has only been getting worse; every one has turned away from me—no, not every one (he said in much bitterness), not every one, for there are those who think, because I was led astray once, I am ready to be so again; and they have been tempting me to join them—like that villain Ball, who 's linked in with a gang of poachers and plunderers, and I suppose wanted me to go hand in hand with him."

"Oh, Harry," I said, "you have indeed need of all prayer; 'lead me not into temptation,' should be ever in your heart and on your lips: you are beset on every side with snares and trials, and if you leave off prayer, if you let go GOD'S hand, you will inevitably fall. Alas! everything, but GOD alone, is against you. Even your heart's best affections are a snare, and the very sight of home and home's trials are all so many arrows in the tempter's hands."

"Aye, they are indeed!" he replied with a deep sigh: "if I were alone, I could bear all, I could defy all, and I would try and trample on all; but I can't, they are too strong for me. And I see everything so different from what it used to be. My poor father, my poor father! you little thought you were leaving mother to such a son, to pull her down and

bring her grey hairs with sorrow to the grave! If mother would but reproach me, find fault with me, be unkind to me, turn me out of doors, do anything! but she never does—she only kisses me; she don't even let me see her cry, if she can help it, and yet I think she must cry all night, she looks so sad, and pining, and sorrowful, that I can't bear it much longer."

"Harry," I said, "we are here in this solitary lane alone,—no eye sees us, but that of GOD only,—no ear but His can hear our voice: it is vain to argue this question with you; reason won't meet it; warning won't touch it. Let us do as we did in that cell in Newgate, and try what prayer can do; and may He that saw and blessed Nathanael beneath the fig-tree, see and bless us too!"

I suited the action to the word, and immediately knelt down on the turf beside the road. Poor Harry looked astonished, and for a moment or two, I think, hesitating; but my own posture, and my immediately commencing with the words of prayer, soon subdued every feeling of resistance, if, indeed, any existed: and I had scarcely uttered more than two or three words before he was kneeling by my side, and, I believe, at the time, from the very depths of a broken heart, joining in the earnest cry to GOD.

At the village we parted, with a most solemn and affectionate warning to be on his guard against any proposition, whether through the medium of Ball or

others, to be in the least degree mixed up with the parties he had named. I left him with deep emotion, with the truest sympathy and compassion; and, I must add, with strange forebodings of deeper misery and sorrow.

CHAPTER XI.

My last sentence was, that I had strange forebodings of still deeper misery and sorrow, and I will now explain why. The last interview with Harry Carsdell, though apparently confidential and unreserved on his part, was far from satisfactory. There was a fierce tone of bitterness and defiance throughout; and though I did not doubt his assertion that his meeting with Thomas Ball had been accidental, as far as he was concerned, yet the very circumstance of the man having sought him under the plea of procuring employment for him gave rise to most painful inferences and suggestions. Ball I had long known to be in league with all the poachers far and near; and that though he ostensibly trafficked in pigs, partridges and pheasants were the more staple commodities of his trade. His very habits rendered him a convenient medium between the poacher and the purchaser, and his ostensible trade served as an equally convenient excuse for all sorts of by-paths,

and visits to out-of-the-way cottages, where he certainly traded, though not always in the commodity supposed; and, like Phil. Purcell, in Carleton's inimitable "Stories of the Irish Peasantry," he always had a pig in hand for barter or for sale. I knew, too, at least I had every reason to fear, that Henry had already had communication with the parties to whom Ball had alluded; and though I had no grounds for supposing that he had ever joined them in any of their nocturnal depredations, yet the very act of trafficking in their plunder was a fearful risk and compromise, and in the present exasperated state of his feelings might lead to still worse entanglement.

I determined, therefore, to call at his mother's cottage at as early an hour as possible on the ensuing morning, partly in the hopes that I might fall in with Harry himself once more, or that, if not, I might speak more unreservedly to his mother. It was a painful part of duty to lay any blame on his aged but fond mother, whose heart could not but bleed in bitterness, but whose weakness, I feared, still spared him, and yielded to much that she should have at once rebuked and stopped; but I had known that for many an hour of the night, of late, at least, a light had been seen burning in her chamber for Henry's return, and I was resolved to use the language of rebuke with a sterner tone than I had hitherto, in my own weakness, exercised. But my resolution was

broken, nay, forgotten, when I entered and saw her with tears streaming down her furrowed cheeks, furrowed not so much with length of years as by the deep lines of grief. Her figure, which but a short time before was hale and erect, was now bent and stooping; and care and sorrow had proved surer underminers of the frame than the declining years of life. A broken heart has been beautifully described as "that disease which kills so slowly none dare call it murder," and yet its ravages are frequently so rapid, so unerring, and so sure, that one sees every day its progress in the wider desolation it has caused, and one might more fittingly liken it to the thunderstorm or the avalanche in the rapidity of its effects. I looked on the altered frame before me, and the language of censure died upon my lips. She had evidently not been in bed the whole night. Her eyes were blood-shot and swollen with sleeplessness and weeping; and as she sat upon her chair almost incapable of motion, I was far more earnest to console than to blame.

"Mrs. Carsdell," I exclaimed, "what is the matter? what is the meaning of all this? Where is Harry? is he in the house?"

"Oh, sir," was her broken cry, "he has not been at home all night. I have sat here; I have gone to the window to listen for his step: I have stood in the door-way, straining for the sound of his foot, but he has not returned. I have tried to pray, but sobs

have choked my very prayers; I tried to gasp out the words, but they have refused to come, and the very effort has seemed to choke me."

Her manner was wild and impetuous, and though on common occasions her expressions scarcely ever advanced beyond ordinary language, yet at this moment sorrow gave an energy and intenseness to her diction as well as her manner, of which she herself was no doubt unconscious, and the source of which she could neither have comprehended nor explained. I was indeed startled both at her manner and her intelligence, so unexpected and so alarming, and I immediately replied,

"Not been at home all night? Why, I parted from him yesterday afternoon, not two hundred yards from your door; and I am sure he went in that direction, for I watched him. He came home, did he not?"

"Oh, yes, he came home, and he seemed so sad and softened too, and talked so kindly, like, about all the misery which he said he had brought upon me; and he seemed to think that if he could get a little money together, two or three pounds, it would be better for him to go away and try and get employment elsewhere, than stay here and be ruined, or tempted to do worse; and if he succeeded and did well, he could then come and fetch his poor mother, he said, to live with him again. And he went on talking about it so earnestly, that I had almost come round to the plan

that he should go, and we were contriving how to get the money for him to start with."

"Why did he not name this to me yesterday?" I said, "why did he not tell me his wishes and plans? I would have lent or given him the money in a moment; he ought to have known me better, and so should you too, Mrs. Carsdell."

"I don't think, sir, the thought ever entered his mind before; for he told me as how he had seen you, and that what you had said to him had put the idea into his mind—at least had made him more earnest than ever to go away; and he did say, 'Oh, mother, if you but knew how I have been tempted to do what is wrong, you would n't wish to keep me here; but I 'll break it off at once, and go away from all:' and then we were talking how to get the money together. I said I was sure you would stand his friend once more, but he would n't listen to it, and said you had done too much for him already; 'and besides, mother,' says he, 'you 'll want a friend when I am gone, and we must n't press him too far.'"

"I honour his feeling," I replied; "but, as I said before, both you and he should have known me better; and if you had proposed to consult me on the matter, I should at once have seen and felt the difficulty, and could have provided for it."

"I did beg him to consult you about it, and told him that it would be wrong to take any steps without

your knowledge and approval; but he said he was sure you would say he had done right, when you knew it, and that the step was in reality the result of your conversation with him."

"What, then?" I immediately said, "do you think that he may have already gone, and that that is the reason he has not returned,—that it was to spare you the pain of parting, that he left in so abrupt a way!"

"Oh, no, no!" sobbed the poor mother; "I would it were so: I would forgive him the unkindness for the kindness. But no, no," hysterically sobbed the mother; "it is not so. He told me, when he left, that he would be sure to return; and—and, sir, he did not go alone; he went with those that could mean no good. Woe is me! I think I could sooner bear to see him brought home a mangled corpse, than return with them that fetched him away."

There was a fearful and a hideous meaning in her words, which, connected with his own previous expressions to myself, and Ball's proposal, struck mournfully on my heart and ear; but I could not, I would not, add to the poor woman's distress by seeming even to comprehend what she meant, or giving utterance to all I felt and dreaded, so I quietly said,

"Do not needlessly distress yourself, Mrs. Carsdell; it may be that Harry has gone further than he meant, in the hopes of making better arrangements for his leaving you, and will soon return to gladden you with the assurance that he has effected his purpose."

I had intended and hoped to have spoken words of comfort, but a "miserable comforter" did I prove myself; for the very suggestion I threw out only added to her anguish, and she said,

"It is the very thing I dread, that he has been led on by his deep anxiety for me, and his earnest desire to raise a few pounds for his purpose of going away, without, as he called it, "stripping me bare;" and that these wicked men have enticed him away with them by this very hope. O my GOD, my GOD, save my poor boy!"

Her anguish of spirit was too deep to be comforted; it could only be diverted by leading her on to tell me all she knew, so I asked—

"Who were the men you allude to, and how many were there? Was Ball one of them?"

"Oh! no, he never goes with them, he's only a go-between, though a deal worse than some of them, for he tempts them on by disposing of what they get. No, no, Ball would n't come here, nor did they come into the house; only they knocked at the door, and I heard James Barker's voice calling Harry."

I shuddered when I heard the name, and guessed the party with whom the unhappy youth had gone; for James Barker, though belonging to and living in an adjoining parish, had gained himself a notoriety, which at once stamped him as the most dangerous associate of youth. Gay, unprincipled, vicious, and idle, he had been from his earliest boyhood; and though

his long career unchecked by detection or penalty had rendered him reckless and hardened, yet there was, and ever had been, a dash of wildness, generosity, and daring which had recommended and retained him as the leader in every scene of vice. In his boyhood he had been a bold marauder in gardens and orchards, scaled the highest walls, and climbed the tallest trees; in his youth, and now in more confirmed manhood, the most notorious and successful poacher in the county; and, if not sadly belied, not averse to other plunder that fell in his way.

Alas! what could be done? where was help to be sought, except from Him, who alone is mighty to save? I had come to rebuke, but I found comfort more needed, and of that my own heart told me I had none to give; my own feelings and apprehensions responded too intensely to those of the poor mother to allow me to speak peace when the heart felt it not; for though there might be no danger, humanly speaking, I knew there must be deep guilt; and I could not but feel how seasonably Satan had timed his temptation, by sending it at the very moment when the best and most loving emotions of his heart had all been called forth to second it. I seemed to myself as if I could almost read the very workings of the poor boy's heart—how the tempter would lead him on to almost justify the act by the purpose which he had in view, and how he would insinuate that it was but once, and then he would

go away for ever. I hardly knew what to reply, but I said,

"Mrs. Carsdell, you have indeed told me distressing tidings; but let us hope that, in His unbounded mercy and the unlimited riches of that grace which willeth not that any should perish, the Lord will not suffer the child of so many prayers finally to perish."

"He is indeed the child of many prayers," was the melancholy answer; "his father died in prayer for him; and his living mother, soon to go with sorrow to *her* grave, has all but wearied Heaven with her cries; but there was none to answer, nor any that regarded."

"Hush, Mrs. Carsdell," I replied; "that is not the language of a Christian heart, nor the words of Christian resignation. GOD'S ear is not, like Baal's, heavy that it cannot hear. Oh, do not say then that there was none to answer. He is a GOD that heareth prayer, and faith recognises the answer even in the silence or denial."

I was about to propose to the mother that we should join in prayer, but ere the words had passed my lips, I caught a glimpse of a man near the window, whose features were familiar to me, but whose name I could not remember at the moment, even if I had ever known it. He seemed as if he had intended to have hurried in, but that the sound of voices had arrested his steps, and he had evidently taken a premonitory glance, and, observing and perhaps recognising me, was making eager and hasty signs for me to come

out to him. I therefore merely observed to Mrs. Carsdell that I would now leave her and return again ere long. There was an expression on the man's countenance, as I glanced upon it, which at once convinced me that he was one of the party with whom Harry had gone away, and moreover, too, that he was the bearer of some evil tidings. His looks were dark and lowering, but mingled with an expression of alarm and almost breathless and impatient terror, which was most painful to look on. I do not say that it was so, but there was an aspect of intoxication suddenly arrested and awakened, like the startled look of a man on the edge of a precipice; and there were sundry marks of mire and clay on his dress, his hands, and even his face, which too plainly told of a struggle and a conflict. A gash too over his brow, from which the blood had streamed, but which the morning air had dried up upon his cheeks, added painfully to the conviction, what indeed his whole appearance testified, of the scenes in which he and his party had been involved.

There was no time to deliberate, for, with strange inconsistency, at the moment he saw me coming out of the house, and the full conviction of who I was rushed upon his mind, he was evidently meditating his escape; so I immediately went up to him, laid my hand with a strong grasp upon his arm, and with a stern and determined tone said, while I looked him full in the face,

"Where is Harry Carsdell?"

He seemed at the moment inclined to deny everything about him, for, like a second Cain, when questioned about his brother, he began to stammer and disclaim all knowledge of him—but I cut him short at once, and said,

"Man, where did you go together last night from this spot, and where have you now left him? Your own appearance tells too truly in what way the night has been passed. Come here with me, and tell me the whole truth without delay."

I drew him on one side, for I dreaded lest the mother should overhear what, for the moment, at least, had better be concealed. He made no resistance, for conscious guilt had unmanned his usual daring; and when we were in some degree out of hearing, as well as sight, I said,

"Now, man, be honest for once, and say where you were last night, and where you have left this widowed mother's child."

"We did n't go after any harm, sir; we only went to Squire Rose's covers."

"No harm!" I exclaimed; "but I cannot stop to convince you of your guilt. What has happened?"

"Why, sir, the keepers met with us, and we 'd a bit of a tussle." This is what he termed the bloody fray which so frequently stains our annals of crime, which brutalizes the minds of so many of our peas-

antry, and renders them familiar to thoughts and deeds of blood, and which, for the preservation of a partridge, a pheasant, or a hare, so often perils the life of man.

"And what has been the consequence?" I exclaimed; "in the name of GOD, man, speak out!"

He seemed subdued by the earnestness of the tone in which I spoke; for his voice fell, and he said with more feeling than I had given him credit for,

"Sad work, indeed, sir. Jim Barker's gun went off, by accident I suppose, and one of the keepers fell; and that aggravated them, and in the scuffle Harry Carsdell got sadly hurt, and fell into the keepers' hands; but Jim got him off, and they're bringing him home, though, as I think, they'd better take him elsewhere, for they'll be sure to be after him, for they know'd him well."

"Hurt,—Harry Carsdell hurt, did you say?—in what way? Tell me the worst at once."

"I don't know the right of it, for you may well believe we were hard put to it to save ourselves; but I fear he is badly wounded, for he was covered with blood, and groaned sadly as they carried him along. I came on to tell his mother they were a-bringing him home, but I don't much like my errand, and perhaps, sir, you'll tell her for me, and I'll be off."

The intelligence thus communicated for a moment overpowered me, and when I recovered self-possession, and was about to ask another question, I found

that my informant had suited the action to the word, and was already out of sight.

Alas! again then had the painful task devolved on me of communicating to this widowed mother the guilt, and misery, and ruin of her child; though I could not but be thankful that the sad intelligence would not come to her through the abrupt and startling medium by which it had reached me. I therefore retraced my steps to the cottage, and once more silently reëntering, looked for a moment in deepest grief on the poor woman. Affection is keen-sighted, and my countenance was, no doubt, an index of sorrow; for she instantly arose, and, almost staggering towards me, cried out,

"Oh, you have seen him, you have seen him, and you are come to tell me he is dead. My boy, my boy!"

"No, Mrs. Carsdell," I quietly and slowly said, "I have not seen him, nor am I come to tell you that he is dead; but I do come to give you pain and sorrow of heart—to tell you that a night of guilt has ended in disaster, and, *it may be*, in death. You said, not many minutes ago, that you could sooner bear to see him brought home a mangled corpse, than return with those he went away with. Did you overrate your own strength, or was it said in full reliance on Him who is a present help in every time of trouble?"

"Oh, my boy, my boy! I am sure he is dead," was her only answer, and she would have rushed out in

frenzied grief to seek and meet him, but I stopped her, and said,

"Stay awhile, he will be here shortly. Ah, Mrs. Carsdell, my heart mourns for you—you have need of all your strength; but may He, who appoints the day, appoint the strength also!"

"Amen! amen!" sobbed the poor woman, and sunk almost convulsively in a chair, while a strong flood of tears came to her relief, and rolled uncontrolled down her cheeks. I concisely told her such circumstances as I had myself learnt, at least, as far as was needful for her at the moment to know, and consoled her, as far as such consolation would go, by assuring her that I would stay and see her poor boy brought home. I had not long to wait, for a hurried tread of feet and whispering of voices soon announced their coming, and I hastily went to the door. Oh, that that scene could be blotted from my memory! but it still remains, and will remain, though the hand shudders while it traces it, and the heart bleeds as it reviews the past. On opening the door, there were many, both men and women, crowding around; for such a sight, at such an hour in the morning, could not be concealed; and many had flocked with them as they bore the wounded youth along. Stretched on a hurdle lay the unhappy boy, his face pale as death, and his eyes closed, his clothes torn, and blood still streaming through them. Two men, who had evidently been the bearers, and one of

whom I immediately recognised as Jim Barker, stood close to the hurdle which they had already placed on the ground; and though indignation against them was the uppermost feeling at the moment, I could not but acknowledge that they had endured much, and run much risk, and endangered their own lives, in bringing the poor lad to his mother's door. I could not, however, altogether restrain my feelings as I looked upon the piteous object before me, and I said to Barker,

"Man, look at your work!"

He looked at me for a moment, and, recognising me, said with more respect, and even feeling, than I had expected,

"It 's no use now, sir, to blame me, nor any one. I 'd give my right arm to undo it, but it can't be helped now. I did n't leave him behind, though, and if I took him away, I 've brought him back, though every moment is of value to my own life, but I do n't mind that; I led him into the scrape, and I wish to GOD, poor fellow, I had never persuaded him."

He then came nearer to me, and said in a lower tone, "There 'll be warrants out against us in a short time, but I do 'nt think they 'll touch him as he is: but I did it all; I killed the keeper. Poor lad! he did n't hurt a hair of any one's head, and that you may testify."

There was something appalling in this avowal—the reckless and desperate confession of a murderer!

and I shuddered at the contact. But before I could answer, or decide what to do, he turned to his companion, and saying, "Come, Tom, we must be off," was almost the same moment out of sight.

I ought, perhaps, to have made an effort to detain him, but even had I had time and recollection enough to have decided on such a step, I doubt whether it could have been effected, so little sympathy is excited, or rather, if any is excited, it is so entirely enlisted on the side of the guilty in these contests, that few would perhaps have lent their aid to secure the blood-stained offender. Besides, he had placed himself in my power by an act of generosity towards his victim, and I was not sorry that his rapid escape prevented any compromise of rigid principle with the dictates of humanity and forbearance.

My whole attention was, however, now turned to the unhappy youth, and his equally unhappy mother; and I wondered why, even in the short space of time that had already elapsed, she had not rushed to her boy and fallen on his body in all the agony of a broken heart. But GOD had mercifully spared her the first shock. At the sound of the hurried tread which had drawn me to the door, her heart too well knew its import; and, exhausted by the previous conflict of a mother's anguish and the night's watching, it had sunk within her, and she was as insensible to all around her as her son upon his bier. One or two of the women, by my direction, bore her away in

that state, lest her opening eyes should see the melancholy scene, and we then proceeded to move poor Harry into his own chamber. I was indeed afraid at the first that all was over, so deadly pale and motionless did he lie; but the pulse still beat, though so faintly that one could hardly detect its feeble fluttering throb, and at times an occasional quivering of the upper lip told of some convulsive thrill of pain. A deep and hollow groan, the first audible sound of life, escaped him as he was lifted from the hurdle to be carried to his chamber; and so painfully did it sound upon my ears, and thrill upon my heart, that I was glad for a short time to escape from the agonizing scene, and leave the ill-fated victim to the care of others.

I had at the first glance of the case despatched a messenger for medical assistance, and till that arrived I continued pacing with slow and melancholy steps before the cottage, meditating with almost stupified feeling on this series of horrors, and from time to time lifting up, with earnest though broken prayer, the strong crying of my heart, that GOD would have mercy on the guilty boy, and spare him yet a while.

I returned with the surgeon to the bed-side of the wounded youth, and, alas! his verdict confirmed my own foreboding fears; "his hours," he said, "were numbered." The mother heard his words. I would have spared her the pang, but she would not be gain-

sayed, and would know the worst; and whether feeling had been paralysed in the previous agony, or, as I firmly believe, He, who gave the blow, gave strength also to bear it, her only exclamation was, probably with reference to what might ensue if he were spared,

"Let him fall into the hands of the Lord, for His mercies are great, and not into the hands of man." It was indeed timely spoken, for almost ere the words had passed her lips I was beckoned from the room, and, on descending into the little apartment below, found the officers of justice with a warrant for the apprehension of Henry Carsdell on a charge of murder!

Beckoning in silence to one of them to follow me to the chamber where the dying youth lay, I merely said, as I pointed to his bed,

"Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord."

It was indeed too evident that he was beyond the reach of any earthly judicature, and the assertion of the surgeon that he was a dying man satisfied every scruple, and with even reverential step the officer quitted the room.

It were most painful, as well as needless, to recount with any minuteness the agonizing details of those dying moments. For a short time the youth awoke to a faint but disturbed recollection of the past; the occurrences of the night, however, were only dim and confused, but some broken links of the conversation he had held with his mother still remained

upon his memory, and, as if in allusion to his intended leaving her, he would say,

"I am going, mother—good bye; I'll come back for you." Then it seemed as if the future in all its awful reality darted across his mind, and his whole frame seemed convulsed with agony. I spoke to him of the Friend of sinners, of the blood that cleanseth from all sin; but his only and repeated moan was, "Not for me, not for me." Delirium again succeeded, but amid its wild and disjointed ravings that low and melancholy moan, 'Not for me, not for me,' was continually heard. The sound became gradually fainter and fainter, as his strength ebbed away, and his last hour was passed in a calm but awful torpor which gave no sign, and afforded no comfort.

COOPER GENT.

CHAPTER I.

"That grey-haired Orphan—
So call him, for humanity to him
No parent was—feelingly could have told
In life, in death, what solitude can breed
Of selfishness, and cruelty, and vice."

Wordsworth.

ONE day, very shortly after coming to reside in the village of ———, as I was taking a sort of reconnoitring ramble through the parish, I spied a thin flickering spire of smoke arising from an aperture in a small ruined tenement, which I had before heedlessly passed by, supposing it to be uninhabited. On seeing, however, this "something that showed of life, though low and mean," I was induced to look more narrowly, and on approaching a small opening that seemed to serve for

a window, I heard a tapping sound, and thought I descried a living being within. It was really no easy matter to guess which was the entrance, so blocked up was the access to it; but at length trusting to a venture, and gently knocking at what seemed a door, my surmises were confirmed by a low though somewhat screaming voice answering my appeal, and bidding me "come in"—which I had no sooner done, than I found myself standing, or rather stooping, in a very small hovel, or, as I supposed it was styled, apartment, not more than eight feet in length and somewhat less in breadth. In the middle of this domain was a low stool covered with the implements of cobbling, and on its centre was squatted a short, miserable, dingy, unshaven object, busily employed at his trade. In one corner was a small recess, where, on the floor, some scanty fuel was evaporating in smoke, part of which was making its slow escape through the aperture where I had noticed it, and the major portion filling the scanty apartment with its nauseous and stifling mist. For a moment or two I stood endeavouring to catch a more accurate view, and ascertain who or what it was that sat before me; but as I felt it necessary to speak, I began by expressing my ignorance of any one living under the roof.

"Like not," was the reply; "few come to see me, except they want their shoes mended."

"Well, my friend," I said, "I am not come on any such errand; but now that I am here, we must

Cooper Gent; or, the Outcast brought Home.

"—— a short, miserable, dingy, unshaven object, busily employed at his trade."—*Page* 176.

be better acquainted; I am your new minister, and as such you are an object of interest to me." On this intimation, he slided from his seat, hastily laying down his tools at his side, and began stroking and smoothing his apron, as if to give himself a neater and smarter appearance. He evidently wished to have asked me to be seated, but one glance at his stool and round his room soon convinced him of the impossibility of such an offer. I had now an opportunity of more narrowly examining my new acquaintance, and as my vision had become in some degree inured to the dim medium through which I viewed him, I could see that he was far below the ordinary height, and that he was strikingly deformed in shape. His features, however, as far as one could ascertain them through the unwashed and unshorn covering which hid them, were not unpleasing, though a sort of shaggy pent-house of eyebrow gave a louring expression to his look. He was considerably beyond the middle age, and deformity had added its own stamp to the lineaments and furrows which time had traced, so that he appeared verging on, or even beyond, threescore years; and the very supposition, or rather conviction, that he had already made so large a stride to the grave, and had, perhaps, scarcely reflected on the awful realities beyond, no doubt gave a tone of tenderness and interest to my inquiries, which sounded strange and unusual to his

ears, and seemed to awaken a chord that had long slumbered in his bosom.

"Do not disturb yourself, my good man," I recommenced, "sit down again; we shall soon be better friends, I hope:—but surely you do not always live here, and alone."

"Yes, I do: here I am all day, and there I sleep at nights," pointing to a huddled heap of clothes in a corner.

"But have you no one to come in and help you? no one to do for you?"

"No; I 'm here all alone, and do what I want for myself: my bed do n't want much making;" and he slightly smiled as he said so, "and as for cooking, I have n't too much of that to do, and besides, I do n't know a friend I have."

"My poor fellow," said I, "yours does indeed appear a very desolate condition; but I think you make it worse than it need be, for you cannot but have, or at least may have, one Friend, who is more especially the helper of the helpless; if you ask Him, He will not, I am sure, deny you; if you go and knock at His door, I am authorized by Him to promise you that it shall assuredly be opened unto you." He was evidently unacquainted with the allusion, or at least it did not strike him, for he replied,

"I do n't know, sir, I 'm sure, whom you mean. I

know no gentleman's door about here that I could take the liberty to knock at. My brother is the only one as ever comes to see me out of kindness like, and he do n't come very often, as indeed how can he, for he lives miles off, and has a large family of his own to look after."

"I did not mean your brother," I said—"I did not know you had one; I meant One that sticketh closer than a brother."

Still he was perplexed, and apparently conning over in his mind the few individuals he could remember, who might have shown him an act of charity or kindness in bygone times; so I added:

"I am surprised and grieved that you do not know the Friend I mean, for, indeed, He is very near to you; and not only that, but He has a house in this village, where, every Sabbath-day, He especially invites all that are weary and heavy laden—just such poor destitute ones as yourself—to come unto Him to refresh themselves, and find rest unto their souls;—nay more, you may every morning and evening, and at noon-day, aye, and every moment, call upon Him even without going out of this miserable tenement of yours, and His ear will be open unto your prayers."

He could not now misunderstand my meaning, and he immediately answered:

"Aye, aye, sir, I now see what you be driving at; you mean God Almighty. Yes, yes, I suppose He is a friend to us all."

This admission, circumscribed and limited as it was, constituted his whole vocabulary and idea of gratitude and dependence. There was not the remotest personal recognition or acknowledgment of any of the Almighty's mercies to himself; in all probability, if the subject ever crossed his thoughts, he would have said that but a very scanty measure had been allotted to him, and that his destitute and forlorn condition was more a subject for repining than thanksgiving. As to dependence, he knew, perhaps, and might have owned, that his continuance in life was from no power of his own; but as to any knowledge of Him, in whom he lived, and moved, and had his being, he had scarcely more than the animals that grazed in the adjoining meadow; and as his own hands prepared his daily food, and his own labour supplied, however scantily, that food, he probably thought that he had a great deal more to do with it than any other being; and I suspect it would have surprised and puzzled him to have been told that he owed anything to another. He owed, indeed, but little to man,—man had owed to him, for he was assuredly among those poor whom God had left always with man for the exercise of his charity and love; and happy had it been for this poor one, through his wretched existence, if his fellow-beings had left him as they found him—an outcast,—if those whom he saw, with whom he came in casual contact, or who crossed his path, had only passed by un-

heedingly, and been content never to bestow a dole nor a thought upon him; but too often they turned in scorn, and contumely, and wrong. And though one could not but mourn over his fate, one could hardly wonder that his untutored mind and darkened spirit, while he felt that he owed no debt to man, had swept away also all recognition of a Being, who, though unseen, had yet been about his path and his bed, and whose eye was still over him in mercy and in love.

CHAPTER II.

I CAN well believe that the feelings described in the preceding chapter, as they rapidly flashed through my mind, communicated, almost unconsciously, a tone of interest, if not of sympathy, to my voice, to which this poor friendless one had long been a stranger. It must be a very stony heart indeed—"petrified," as Burns calls it, by a lengthened course of selfish profligacy, that does not respond to the key-note of sympathy. It is no new feeling in human nature, confined to no creed nor sect; Greek or Jew, Trojan or Tyrian, the rich man on his bed of down in sickness and suffering, and the poor man on his pallet of straw in a hovel or a hospital, all alike have a chord in the heart, which, if properly touched, will always

give forth an answering note to sympathy. The Epicurean poet, in his cold sensualism, could say, "If you wish me to weep, let me first see your own tears;" and one earlier and far wiser than he said, long before him, "As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man."

I do not say but that in seasons of strong health, animal spirits, and abundant fortune, when all is bright and brilliant, and the heart untouched by care, and "its withers unwrung" by sorrow, some may be found to sneer at sympathy. Under such circumstances, if I may so speak, they perhaps can afford to do it; and I have even heard one, in his bold confidence and hard-hearted callousness, say that "he would rather die in a ditch than be pestered with sympathy."

I have, however, generally found such men, when the hand of the Lord has indeed touched them, the most exacting and the most imperious of all in their demands on the services of those over whom they could exercise the slightest authority or control, whether wife, or children, or servants,—impatient and irritable at the least delay or the slightest mistake, claiming every sacrifice as a right, fretful at and resenting every stoppage, even of exhausted strength, or the momentary closing of a wearied eyelid, as a wrong; and, as a natural result, most thoroughly ungrateful for all. I do not, of course, mean to say that anything like *sympathy* can exist

between parties like these; it is simply tyranny and power on the one side, and Christian duty and obedience to a higher law, or, it may be, love still surviving amid the wrecks of its earlier day-dreams, and triumphing over the trials and exactions of cold and heartless selfishness, on the other. But even these extreme, though, alas! not unfrequent, cases show that GOD never intended man to walk alone; and that when he attempts it, failure and disappointment, misery and unhappiness, are the consequence. Man, in reality, is the most helpless of all beings, when left to battle with the storm alone; helpless in the beginning of his existence, helpless in its progress, and helpless still in its close and termination. I do not mean spiritually only—there, no doubt, he is helplessness itself—but physically he is the very weakest of all GOD'S creatures; and no one has ever worked out the problem of being happy alone, much less of fulfilling those ends of his being for which he was placed in this world of trial and suffering. There never has been any reversal of that fiat of wisdom and of mercy of Him who made man, and who knew what was in man, and who yet pronounced of the work of His own hands, though pure and perfect and holy, "It is not good that the man should be alone."

My poor friend, of whom I am now writing, had certainly not worked out the problem; the very situation in which I found him, the desolateness

which seemed to hem him in on every side, and the very admission he had made as to his utter destitution and friendless condition, at once evidenced how complete had been *his* failure. No doubt, if I had asked him to explain its cause, he would have laid the whole blame on his fellow-creatures, and, by implication, on GOD himself, rather than have traced it to his own wild and wayward will.

It may, perhaps, excite astonishment that, in a Christian land, a land abounding, too, with Christian privileges and Sabbath ordinances, an individual should be found so utterly ignorant of his being, his responsibility, and almost simplest religious truths and principles, as this poor dwarf was. But, to say nothing of the length of time to which the period of my story carries me back, and when, assuredly, in the days of this man's childhood education was as rare as an angel's visit, and even where a school-house did exist, was usually intrusted to some decrepit crone or crippled pauper, whose only teaching was to perpetuate their own ignorance and blunders, I fear that even the present experience of many a minister of the Gospel, and that, too, in the most favoured districts, could testify to equally painful instances of spiritual destitution, extending even through a longer life, and, in the present age of aggressive appliances, resisting far more powerful and continued means of grace than had ever fallen to the lot of this poor hapless outcast. We must mourn over such, when we meet with them,—

and who does not meet with them?—yet, even while we mourn, we cannot but adore the long-suffering and forbearance of that gracious GOD, who, even at the eleventh hour, knocks once more at the hitherto closed and cobwebbed door of man's heart, and who, as in the present instance, directs the casual step or the passing greeting to be a means of awakening grace; and when, to human eye and in human estimation, all appears dry and hard, and unyielding as the trodden foot-path, Himself touches the flinty rock of the human heart, and bids the waters gush out.

As I contemplated the poor wretched being that was sitting before me on his low stunted bench, on which, at my bidding, he had resumed his seat and his work, the feeling that almost instinctively arose in my mind was the apparent utter hopelessness, I had almost said the repulsiveness, of the task which had thus, as it were, started up in my path; and yet to such I was sent! Nay, I could not doubt that the very flickering smoke which had caught my eye, and drawn my steps to that miserable hovel, unseen, or at least unheeded, as I passed it before, was indeed, if I may so call it, the Lord's signal to arrest my heedless steps; and, I might hope, His signal of mercy also to this poor benighted soul, ignorant though he was of his Benefactor, having no sense of the past mercy that had spared him, and no knowledge, nor even desire, for the far richer mercies which the grace of GOD might have in store for him.

In reply, therefore, to his poor, limited, and general admission, that he "supposed GOD was the friend of all," I could not help answering,

"It is quite true, as you say, in one sense, GOD is indeed the friend of all; for His mercies are over *all* his works, and He tells us Himself that He is kind to *all*, that He makes His sun to rise and shine on the evil and the good, and sends His rain alike on the just and on the unjust. You must yourself have a thousand and a thousand times observed this, though I dare say the thought never struck you, or gave rise to a moment's reflection. You never saw, did you, the sun make any difference between the ground and the crops of the good and the bad man, nor the rain pass over the field of the wicked man, and refresh only the pastures and the meadows of the godly? They alike fertilized and ripened the harvests of both, did they not?"

"In course, sir; I don't see how they could do otherwise, and I don't suppose they know anything about the matter, nor the rain guess whose field it 's falling on."

"Nor do I," I replied; "but the Creator of the sun and the rain does. It is at His bidding the sun rises and sets; the hail, and the rain, and the snow, and the stormy wind alike fulfil his word; so that in this sense, you see, you are right in saying that GOD is a friend to all. But what I should like and want you to feel is, that GOD is a friend to yourself."

"I don't know about that, sir. He has n't done much for me, at any rate, as you see."

"Well," I said, "your condition is certainly one of much destitution, and I am very sorry for it, and should much like to see it mended; but perhaps it is in a great measure your own fault for not asking. Did you ever ask GOD to be your friend? Did you ever go to Him, and say, 'Lord! I am poor and needy, help Thou me.'"

He looked up in my face in much astonishment, and said,

"Bless you, sir, how could I go to GOD and say that. I 'm no scholar, and GOD would n't condescend to hear the like of me."

"There, my friend, I think you are wrong. I have got GOD'S own words in my pocket, and I 'll just read to you what happened to a poor man, who did go to GOD, and pleaded before Him his deep poverty and distress."

I accordingly opened my Bible, and read to him,

"This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all His troubles." Psalm xxxiv. 6.

"That was comfort," I said, "was it not? And I am sure that if you do the same, the Lord will be equally ready to hear and save you out of your trouble."

"But perhaps that poor man had some friend to plead for him; and I 'm sure I have n't one in the world I could ask to do anything for me."

"Most assuredly he had," I replied; "you are quite right in that too; he had a very powerful friend and advocate to plead for him."

"Aye, I thought so; but you see, sir, as how I have none, and I don't want to trouble anybody. I've pretty most all my life done for myself, and I haven't got much to thank anybody for, and I don't want to begin now. I dare say I shall do pretty well, and as I don't trouble my neighbours, I don't want them to trouble me;" and then, as if he felt that he had somehow said something rude, he added, "No offence to you, sir, for kindly calling to see me."

I saw, however, that he was beginning, if not to get tired of me, at least to be afraid of my coming to close quarters with him, so I merely said;—

"Well, my poor friend, I do not think any of us could do very well without each other's help; I am sure, at least, I could not, and I can't say that I think your management of yourself looks over satisfactory."

He smiled at this, or at least something that was intended for a smile came over his features, and he said good-humouredly,

"I be n't much of a housemaid, to be sure; but then I've got nothing to keep tidy, and I'm as used to it as eels are to skinning, they say, and so I do n't mind it. I dare say other folks would n't like my housekeeping."

"I dare say not," I said, "and I think you would not be displeased if it were a little mended. I should

think you must have many a moping melancholy hour here by yourself—perhaps many a bitter memory as you look back on the past, and I think I may add, very little of hope also, as you look forward to the future. Life must be a sad blank with you, my poor friend. Can you read?" I asked.

"Yes," he said, "I can read tolerably tidy, but no thanks to anybody for that—I mostly picked it up by myself; there was n't much instruction when I was a boy."

"Perhaps," I said, "your mother taught you a little herself, at least I hope she taught you a child's prayers, and that even now you may remember those prayers of your childhood."

At this allusion to his childhood, I saw a fierce scowl instantly darken over his face; his hands clutched the waxed thread, with which he was cobbling a shoe, with almost ferocity, and his shaggy eyebrows closed together with a most ominous frown which seemed to contract his whole forehead into a dark overhanging cloud, and he answered with fierce and rude impatience,

"Do n't talk to me of mother; when I was a child, she never taught me anything but curses; and as to father, I never got anything from him but cuffs and kicks and blows; so I have n't got much to thank them for;" and he then added, in an under-tone, as if to himself, "they hated me, and I 'm sure I hated them."

"I am very sorry," I said, "to have touched on a subject that gives you so much pain. I do not wonder at your feeling it so strongly, it would be strange if you did not; but it only convinces me the more how much you have needed, and how much you have missed by your not knowing more of that Friend of whom I spoke to you. He was the very one for such trial and sorrow as yours;" and I again opened my Bible and said, "Just listen, how tenderly He dealt with one who was very much in the same sad circumstances as yourself, 'When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up.'"

He was evidently touched with an allusion so appropriate and so exactly suiting his own case, and he said in a far milder, and more subdued tone,

"I 'd no one to teach me anything good. I was only called 'a crooked little brat,' and many a time mother wished me out of the way, and father too, as for that; and if it had n't been for Charles, I think I should have made away with myself."

"Who was Charles?" I asked.

"Why, sir, Charles was my brother—him as I just now mentioned to you. Out of them all, father and mother, and brothers and sisters, he was the only one that had a kind word or a kind look for me; and I did love him."

And at the mention of the only human being from whom this poor outcast had ever heard a word of kindness or affection, I could see his eyes fill with

tears. The fierceness, which but a few moments before had clouded over his features, was altogether gone, and human feeling and human sympathy once more developed itself amid his assumed misanthropy, like some surviving flower amid the snows of winter.

"Well," I said, "I will not detain you any longer; but as you say you can read, I will leave with you this book, in which you will find a great many messages and evidences of GOD'S love, like the two I have read to you; and I will just mark one or two, which I think you will feel an interest in reading. But," I added, "there is nothing like coming to GOD'S own house to hear GOD'S own message. Of course it can be delivered elsewhere, and blessed elsewhere; but GOD has especially appointed both a place and a day in which He invites all to come to Him, with a promise that wherever they meet together, however few in number they may be, in the name of his beloved Son, He will himself be present, in the very midst of them, they kneeling before Him, and He stretching out His hands to bless and to comfort them. Just hear His own words, and then stay away, if you can still turn a deaf ear to the tender love of One, who, as I told you just now, 'sticketh closer than a brother,' and loves with a far more touching love than that even of your brother Charles."

As I said this, I again opened my Bible and read,

"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

I could not possibly leave sweeter words, or a more affecting message for memory to dwell upon. I would not weaken their impression by any addition of my own; I therefore simply closed the book, and laid it on his stool, and merely saying 'Good morning," I quitted the miserable hovel, in which this poor outcast of his race had become apparently a contented tenant.

CHAPTER III.

I HAD scarce quitted the poor old occupant of the tenement I have described, before I recollected that, in the crowding in of other thoughts and other feelings, I had omitted to ask his name. It was, indeed, an omission easily rectified—a few steps back, and his own lips would have enlightened me, but I preferred leaving him alone, and, as I hoped, ruminating on my last words; so calling to the first boy who crossed my path, I said to him, pointing to the hovel:

"What's the name of the old man who lives in there?"

"Do you mean the old cobbler, sir? His name is Cooper Gent."

In the first outline of this story, when impressions were strong and vivid, and the memory of my old friend still survived among us in all its freshness, I had, for obvious reasons, substituted another name for

the very singular patronymic which he bore. But years have, I believe, swept away every vestige of poor COOPER and his belongings, save that earthly record of his burial which my own hands traced in the Parish Register; and I have, therefore, now a melancholy pleasure in restoring the real name of this interesting individual, so associated as he was for some few years with the earlier reminiscences of professional life. The very oddity of his name coïncided strangely with his odd appearance, and gave rise to many good-humoured jests, and puns, and epigrams, and even epithalamiums, among the younger and merry-hearted members of our circle, when COOPER's name became familiar as a household word among us. I say epithalamiums, for though, of course, poor COOPER never changed to Benedict, yet joyous wights would suggest the feasibility of such an occurrence, and would ring the changes on his name in sundry addresses to the supposed object of his affections. But I am forgetting my purpose, and the boy whom I have stopped, if not the reader, is impatient to be dismissed, so I said:

"You mean, I suppose, that his name is 'COOPER,' and that he calls himself 'GENT,' or 'Gentleman'?"

"I don't know what he calls himself, but folks always call him MR. GENT, and there be others of the name that I know of."

"How long has he lived there?" was my next inquiry.

"Nearly, almost, ever since he came to the village."

"And how long is that?" I asked.

"I don't know exactly, but I suppose somewhere nigh upon two year."

"Where did he come from? Was he born here, and came back after a long absence, or is he altogether a stranger?"

"I 'm sure I do n't know anything about him; I 've heard father say COOPER was n't in the village when he was a boy. But folks did say he was born here and once lived here, and they call him 'one of the parish.' I dare say grandfather knew him, but he was dead before Mr. GENT came back."

"Whose place is it he lives in?" I asked.

"Why, it belongs to Master Cleaver, sir; he was going to pull it down, when the old man asked so hard to be allowed to live in it, he gave him leave to bide there, and so he has done ever since."

"Well, my poor lad," I said, "I am obliged by your stopping to tell me all you know, and I hope you are too kind to make a mock at the poor old man, whom GOD has so crippled and distorted."

The boy looked very much like an owl caught in a trap, but he said, "I do n't know that I mock him; I often go an errand for him out of kindness, for he do n't much like going up town; but, sir," the boy slyly added, looking sideways up in my face, "he *is* a queer one to look at, ain't he, sir?"

"He certainly is singular in appearance," I re-

plied; "and if he had made himself up into that queer shape, as you call it, to make silly boys laugh, I should say 'laugh on;' but you see it is the same hand of the same GOD that made you and me straight and upright that has made him so crooked and deformed, and in finding fault with him we find fault with Him that made him. So now, my good boy, just point out the way to Mr. Cleaver's house, and I'll go and ask him a few questions about the poor old man. We must all try and do him some good; and I am glad to find you do sometimes show him a little kindness in going an errand for him. GOD keeps an account even of a cup of cold water given in His name."

He pointed out a footpath across two or three fields, which soon brought me to the house I wanted, and to him whom I suppose I must call COOPER GENT'S landlord. It was certainly no large investment of capital, and, I presume, no large return of income; in fact, as I afterwards heard, the rent was just fourpence a week.

My visit, however, proved unsatisfactory, and it was but little that I could extract from Mr. Cleaver. He had never known the poor outcast till his recent return to the village; he had, indeed, often heard his father speak of such an one, and wonder what had become of him. Some of the name had remained in the village for many years, and he had known and employed them; but they had all died, he believed,

or migrated elsewhere; and he had understood that there was still one brother, living in the neighbouring town of W——gh. This I concluded to be the brother Charles, to whom COOPER had made so affectionate an allusion.

I confess that I felt so interested and anxious about the poor man, and so desirous to ascertain all I could about him before I saw him again, that I determined to lose no time in ferreting out this brother, and gaining from him such information of his earlier days, and, indeed, of his whole life till his return to his native village, as he might be disposed or capable of affording me. Accordingly, the next morning I proceeded to W——gh, and after some inquiry discovered the object of my search. As I was altogether a stranger to him, he was evidently at a loss to understand the purport of my visit, though he at once asked me in, and respectfully stood while he invited me to be seated. I lost no time in telling him who I was, and for what purpose I had come.

"I am the minister of ———, where I have just come to reside, and I want to ask you a few questions about your poor brother COOPER, whom I saw yesterday for the first time. He seems in a sad, helpless state of destitution, and I should be glad to do anything I could to make him more comfortable, if he would let me, and I knew how."

"Aye, sir, that 's it; I do n't know as how he will let you; he has had a deal of rough usage in his day,

and suspects most that come nigh him. The moment any one begins to talk kindly, or to take an interest in him, he rolls himself up like a hedgehog, and you can't get at him no how."

"Well," I said, "he may be, I dare say, a little suspicious of people. Poor fellow! I suspect he has been a sort of half-Ishmael from his birth—every man's hand against him, and his hand, if not against everybody, at least warding off what he thought were blows aimed at him. But," I added, "I do not think he showed any reluctance or annoyance at my visit yesterday; in fact I thought him touched, and a little softened, at the apparent interest I expressed for him; and when he mentioned you, his eyes filled with tears. That's a good sign, anyhow, my friend, —a soft spot in the heart yet; not all hard as the trodden foot-path; and I think if you and I were to set to work discreetly, we could get the plough in, and break up the fallow ground, and sow some good seed yet."

"The Lord in His mercy grant it!" said his brother; and his eyes showed how instantaneously, in such moments, the heart lifts up, as it were, the valve that confines nature's tears, and lets them gush out.

"I should like," I continued, "to know more about your brother's earlier years; of course I have not asked him any questions as to anything of the past; if I had, I suspect he would, as you say, have rolled himself up into a hedgehog, or showed like a porcu-

pine with every quill in battle-array, and I can't find any one in the village that knows anything about him. He seems to have tumbled in among them in the dark, and nobody knows where he dropped from."

"Why, sir, I can't say much myself about his coming back, for I knew nothing of him, and had n't heard nor seen anything of him for many a long year, till I was told he was come back again to the old place; and since then we have n't seen so much of each other as you might suppose. Poor folks can't afford much time for feeling. I would have had him home here with me, but he would n't come; and I think he was afraid of the children."

"But still," I said, "I dare say he has at times been more communicative to you than to the rest of the world; at any rate it would be a great aid in any future intercourse I may have with him, to learn as much as I can about him, and in what habits he has spent his previous years. Even from the little I have already seen, and the very short conversation we have already had, I could at once put my finger on the great plague-sore, the festering boil and blain of his present condition; but I plainly see he would as yet only shrink from the touch, and I should repel far more than attract."

I need not, perhaps, keep up the colloquial form of the dialogue between myself and COOPER GENT'S brother. He was willing enough to be communicative, but I soon discovered that he really knew

little of his brother's course since almost his very boyhood. I will therefore throw into the more continuous narrative of the next chapter or two the information I gleaned from this visit, and from some other sources, as well as fill up the crevices and chinks with such scraps as I afterwards elicited from COOPER himself in his moments of more confidential communication.

CHAPTER IV.

IT had been a very painful feeling to me to find almost within a stone's throw of my own door, and among a nominally Christian people, a human being so utterly neglected and disregarded; and I was at first inclined to attach blame to others. But it was soon evident, that if censure belonged to any, it was chiefly to himself, at least since his return to the village. No doubt, injustice and wrong, and cruel gibe and jest, had early fostered a spirit of misanthropy, and made him shun his fellow-men; and it was sad to think that the first lesson of man's unkindness which he learned was learned beneath the roof of his childhood, and his own parents his chief instructors; while their taunts and invectives were quickly caught and repeated with all the aggravation of childish spite, with one exception, by his own brothers and sisters.

And as they experienced no check from the father or mother, so they soon ascertained the fact that, as far as COOPER'S powers of resistance went, they could play the tyrant towards him with perfect impunity. The jests and the jeers and the wrongs of his own home soon spread beyond its narrow walls, and ere long poor COOPER became the regular foot-ball of the village, which every hulking bully of a boy, or girl either, felt inclined to kick or shy at, as he would at a donkey or miserable cat that crossed his path.

Alas! that beings of a kindred dust should ever taunt a creature of GOD, because his frame is not moulded in the same proportions nor symmetry as our own! that the very circumstance which is ordained of GOD to excite our pity and enlist our sympathy should awaken only the unmanly gibe or the wanton sneer! that the very helplessness of the frame should be the provocation of wrong! But a thousand-fold more sad, alas! is it, when a parent views with unkindly aspect or unnatural alienation the very causes that demand its intensest sympathy; when the babe, which should be folded in the closest recesses of a mother's bosom, and watched over with the never-sleeping eye of tenderness, is not merely forgotten and untended, but repulsed and thrust away in weariness and disgust! Helplessness is indeed the tie that binds man to man through all the varieties of social existence, and yet with what strange inconsistency is it that he so often spurns from him

the being that most needs his sympathy and protection.

The parents of COOPER GENT were not exactly in the class called labourers, for the father called himself a tradesman, because he mended shoes, and made them too when he could get an order, which was not very often, inasmuch as Mr. Gent, sen., had so unfavourable an opinion of the honesty of his customers that he generally demanded payment, either in whole or in part, before he commenced the work, and had besides so very treacherous a memory of his own, that when he had received the money it was exceedingly difficult to bring to his recollection that, as a necessary consequence, the boots or the shoes were to follow in due course. Mrs. Gent too, on the score of her being a tradesman's wife, looked with considerable scorn on the idea of her own labour helping out the pittance of the family, or even on any needle-work, except trimming her own caps and flouncing her own gowns. It was a poor, scrambling, half-starving sort of life they led of it, what with the mother's gentility and the father's scanty and ill-paid work. He was too, I fear, no exception to the general rule, which classes these village-sons of Crispin among the most inveterate frequenters of the public-house. Fortunately, he lived before the days of beer-shops, with all their fatal facility of ruin, or he would assuredly have set one up, and established a shoe-club in his house, with a two-fold laudable pur-

pose, of fleecing his poorer neighbours, and providing a legitimate excuse for his own increased potations on club nights. Be this as it may, the whole set bore an unmistakeable mark of what one may mildly call "an ill-conditioned family."

I do not think COOPER was the youngest of the race, but at this distance of time I have forgotten in what numbered niche he stood in the family genealogy; there were, however, several, both brothers and sisters, older as well as younger than himself. An accident to his mother before his birth rendered the helpless babe a deformed child—and the sight of deformity, though engendered in her own womb, excited only aversion in a mother's heart. A large family, too, to a labouring man in those days, as well as in our own, was no source of exultation or joy; as the olive-branches clustered around his table, instead of gazing on them with gratitude and pride as tokens of Heaven's bounty, and sources of future strength and support as his own vigour decayed, and old age needed shelter in repose, he but looked upon them as so many needy claimants on his own scanty meal, or calculated how far an additional mouth might warrant a further appeal to parish bounty. In this light only was this poor child regarded; and as soon as he could begin to reason, a mother's unkindness and a father's harshness perplexed his infant powers, nor could he understand how he alone was denied his share of parental love.

Of the whole family circle, as I have already said, one brother alone looked with an eye of pity on the helpless outcast—one heart alone felt the yearnings of affection for the desolate being under the roof. No mother, no sister, folded him to her bosom, or with words or looks of sympathy soothed his childish sorrows. It was but one solitary shaft around which the tendrils of his young affections could entwine, and they clung to it with the tenacity which felt that, if that prop were removed, all would fall to the ground and be trampled under foot. Into that brother's bosom were his infant tears shed, into that ear were his boyish griefs poured, and wherever Charles went, there was poor little COOPER by his side, looking up to him as the only being on whose protection he could rely, or in whose tenderness he could find a resting-place. COOPER certainly was no logician; he had never heard of the science, and would have been sorely puzzled to have explained the link between the premise and conclusion of a syllogism; and yet instinct unerringly led him to the inference that he was hated and reviled at home, and jeered abroad, because of his deformity. He looked at other men and women, and saw them unlike himself; he cast an envious glance on other children, as they frolicked by him in their merry gambols, and he saw no stamp of stunted malformation, such as was visible on his own frame; and it soon became a natural question with the poor boy, "who had made him so,

and why he was made so?" in somewhat of the vain and angry spirit of the clay demanding of the potter that had fashioned it into a vessel unto dishonour, "Why hast thou made me thus?" And then, alas! the enmity that was in his heart against his fellow-creatures became unconsciously blended with enmity against his Creator, as he brooded in secrecy and silence over the bitterness of his spirit. It is true he did sometimes in his child's language give utterance to these thoughts that stirred within him to his brother. But poor Charles was no theologian, and, perhaps, in his own ignorance, was more likely to be converted to COOPER'S feelings than COOPER to his. He felt, indeed, that there was a fallacy somewhere in the argument, though he could not detect it, while the child that felt and writhed beneath the daily and hourly wrong that met him was less likely than he to ravel out the perplexity.

But in this, as in other families, the links of union are soon severed, the spell of holy brotherhood is soon broken, and the claims and duties of life call early on the various members, in their successive series, to go forth into the world to endure, and to fight their own battle—or, to speak perhaps more truthfully, though more homely, to relieve the commissariat at home. COOPER lost his only stay when he was nine years of age, by his brother Charles going from home to seek employment and subsistence elsewhere, and he then felt that he was desolate indeed;

and his only solace was to weep, and look forward to the annual village-wake, which, for one day, at least, brought back those scattered members of the circle who were within reach. But these solitary gleams of sunshine, and at such distant intervals, could in no degree compensate for the long wintry year of unkindness.

Neglect and ill-usage produced its natural fruit. The flower that might have blossomed beneath the sunny warmth of a mother's love was nipped in the bud, and never opened a single leaf nor petal; the genial current of natural affection was frozen and congealed, and, instead of the joyous outburst of buoyant and boyish spirits, was far more frequently heard the shriek of terror or of pain, or the almost maniac impotence of rage. They sowed hemlock, and assuredly they reaped but little else.

He was, indeed, very often bundled off to a school in the village; but as this was simply to get him out of his mother's way, it was a matter of perfect indifference whether he found his way there, or loitered on the road, or played truant in any other shape: provided his mother was not bored with him, the end was attained, wherever he spent the hours. At the age of twelve or fourteen his father made a show of apprenticing him to himself at his own trade; in almost every respect it was the merest farce, except in one respect, in which it proved far more of a tragedy to the poor boy; for the father now claimed the ad-

ditional power and exercised the additional tyranny of a master over the unfortunate child. I do not mean to say that he had ever before evinced any of the natural feelings of a father, or blended parental indulgence with the necessary correction of a child; I simply mean, that whatever might have been his views of the relation that existed between a father and his child, all was now merged in the one paramount idea of a master over his drudge, or a driver over a slave. Before, the poor boy could escape from the brutalities of home into the fields or woods, and neither interest nor anxiety was ever felt or expressed about his absence; but now he was chained, as it were, to the miserable out-house, which his father called his workshop, and was there subject, from morning till night, to all the coarse invectives, the blasphemous oaths, and the unstinted cruelties of one who seemed to find a natural vent for the brutalities of his temper on this miserable object.

I do not know whether it was the secret desire of his unnatural parents to drive him from their home —God alone knows that secret—but most assuredly (it was often remarked at the time, and afterwards) no persons ever worked more perseveringly to obtain an end, or succeeded better, if such was their object. One evening the boy was sent to a solitary house at a distance with some work that he had finished, and he never returned home. When the night closed in, and the boy returned not, the father, with an oath,

locked the door against him, and swore he should not come in that night. But the night passed and the day dawned, and no boy returned; and then the father worked himself up into a still greater rage, and threatened what he would do when he did come back. But the day, and the week, and the year, and year upon year passed on, and no tidings were ever heard of the poor outcast boy. Rumours were at first spread that he had destroyed himself, but no clue was found to such a catastrophe, and they soon died away; and the more general and current obloquy pointed, and far more truly, to the unnatural parents and the unkind fraternity and sisterhood at home, as the real cause why the poor boy had run away for ever from such a den of scorpions. So completely, however, had the tide of public opinion changed, that though, while he was at home, not one befriended him, or addressed a word of sympathy to him, but rather aided and abetted in all the paltry bullying and outrage he met with; yet, had the boy at this juncture returned, he would have returned in triumph, and every voice been lifted up in his favour, and in execration of those who had hounded him forth into exile.

But he came not,—and the poor outcast boy was soon as thoroughly blotted out from the memory of that generation, as a cloud that might have darkened the sky for a passing moment, and had been dispersed and forgotten in the next gleam of sunshine.

CHAPTER V.

THE poor pariah of the village was soon utterly forgotten; everything progressed exactly as it would have done had he been in his grave. People went on eating and drinking, planting and building, sowing and harvesting, marrying and giving in marriage, as if no such thing as sorrow was in the world, or even likely to be, at least while they were in it; and the breaking of a poor boy's heart, or the misery that could not fail to darken his young life, were about as insignificant events in the ever-hurrying, ever-bustling current of human life, as if a moth had been crushed, or a beetle withdrawn from existence.

It would have been nearly the same, if the minister, or the squire of the parish, or the head farmer, or the chief tradesman, had died. Life and the living would have bustled about as heedlessly and anxiously, heedless of the past, anxious for the future; the usual occupations and engagements and transactions of life would have resumed their course, and rolled over the past, blotting out its memory, as naturally as the next ripple of a stream obliterates the slight eddy caused by the dipping of a gnat or fly.

There may be, in its first aspect, something painful in this oblivious speeding onwards of the world's machinery, and it may be mortifying also; but really,

when one comes to reason upon it, there is great fittingness in it, and if one cannot exactly call it consolation, one sees, at least, great usefulness and wisdom in the appointment, which thus ordains that life should go on in its usual course unimpeded by those continually occurring events of individual suffering, or the withdrawal of one after another from its ever shifting scenes.

Even a monarch's death stays not the ordinary current of existence, and everything around us shows, that however naturally the selfish man has fallen in with, and perhaps extended, the arrangement, yet, after all, it is the arrangement of infinite wisdom, as well as unbounded love. GOD'S sun shines as brightly, His rains fall as graciously, night and day as regularly succeed each other, and all the functions and duties of life as imperatively demand their discharge, whatever may be the amount of sorrow or suffering in any solitary case, or beneath any single roof. I have often been struck by the sight of some funeral train in the streets of London—not so much the gaudy cavalcade of hearse with nodding plumes, and *mourning* coaches—as if the coaches supplied the mourning that was requisite—and scarfed attendants walking stately by the side,—I mean rather some humble train of three or four mourners on foot behind a coffin, that to them possibly contains all, or so much that was dear; and the living just for the moment

step aside to let it pass, and then the stream closes in, and flows on as rapidly as ever. And even this sight and these scenes London, with its living claims, has jostled out of its streets for ever.

There was no one, however, to mourn over the withdrawal of the poor insignificant unit, of whom I am writing, from his native village; and if the current of life did not flow in its usual channel in the home he had fled from, it was simply because cruelty had no longer its wonted outlet, and tyranny and spite had lost its object. The inmates of COOPER'S home might have felt somewhat as we should suppose Domitian would have felt, when he had killed his last fly. One would have been glad to have known, if any thoughts about their wandering boy, any anxiety about his fate, any self-accusings, suspicions of past unkindness and neglect, any longings to behold his face once more, had ever darkened or saddened the hearts of his unnatural kindred. I fear not: it is the tendency of cruelty to harden more and more; it "grows by what it feeds on," more than any other temper, passion, or disease; and though the father outlived most of his children, and the mother outlived her husband, yet, as far as outward observation went, neither of them evidenced any remorse for the past, or any yearnings after the lost one. So true is the observation of an old writer, that "the same sun which melts the wax only hardens the clay," and the

same dispensations which in one heart soften into tenderness, in another beget only callousness and obduracy.

I once indeed heard an unnatural mother say over the dead body of a daughter, whom she had driven into sin, and hurried to an early death, "Well, thank GOD, I have seen the end of her," as if taking comfort to herself that she had seen and known the end of her child, instead of the painful anguish and suspense of ignorance. But the exclamation grated so harshly on my heart and ear, that I could not help indignantly exclaiming, "Seen the end of your child? what! are your eyes never again to behold this child? Is there no day appointed in which you will once more meet? The hour is coming in which all that are in their graves shall hear His voice and come forth. Parents will re-meet their children, and children their parents; you can have no concealment then; the secrets of all hearts, the secrets of all households, what you have whispered in that child's ear, every word of sin your child had picked up from your lips, every lesson of impurity she had learned from your practice and your suggestion,—all will be disclosed. And even if, through the long-suffering grace and mercy of GOD, an abiding change be wrought in your own heart, if you should be brought by the Spirit of GOD to a deep and genuine acknowledgment of your own sin, even then, will no saddening recollections of your lost child darken your days with sorrow, and

your nights with tears? Will there be no seasons of gushing and agonizing memory over the early grave of her whom yourself allured and enticed to sin? Will no thoughts by day, no visions by night, recall the face and features of that child in her days of comparative purity and innocence? Will no fancied sound strike upon your ear in the moanings of the wind, as if it bore the accents of your child, "Save me, save me, mother, from this place of torment?"

But to COOPER'S parents the poor consolation, if it would have been any, was not vouchsafed of seeing "the end of their child." They never met again; they never heard tidings, nor even a syllable, of the wandering outcast; whether he was still living or had died, they knew not, and perhaps they cared not; whether the world had pitied him in his destitution, or had proved a still more cruel and heartless stepmother than his own parent, was alike unknown. It was as if some receding wave of the sea had swept off a pebble or a shell in its surge, and borne it away into its unfathomable depths.

Nearly forty years had now elapsed, when one evening in November—a cold and dreary evening, when the pinching blasts of beginning winter were already severely felt, and even a sleeting drizzling snow was giving a foretaste of the desolating reign about to succeed—when those who had a roof to shelter and a fire to warm them were glad and grateful,

when windows were closed and doors shut against the intrusion of the piercing, cutting wind, a low and tremulous knocking was heard at the door of the village school-master's house. It was not immediately answered, for too many were the knocks at such a door after night-fall, in wanton sport, to entice any one on such an evening to quit the blazing fire. For a time the sound was not repeated, and the inmates set it down as the oft-repeated trick of some idle truant or urchin, who had probably received some well-merited castigation in the morning.

The knocking was, however, shortly after repeated, equally low but more hurriedly than before; and on lifting the latch to ascertain the visitant, there stood a miserable, helpless object, shivering with cold, and with but scanty clothing to protect him from the inclement wind which was howling around. It was poor COOPER GENT! The last time he had stood at that door and knocked, he was a boy—a melancholy, sorrow-stricken boy indeed, but still with the smoothness of boyhood on his young cheeks, and a dark glossy hue on his locks; and if not with the elasticity of boyhood in his crippled frame, with somewhat, at least, of the feelings of that age in his yet uncrushed heart. Now he stood there a feeble, wrinkled, weather-beaten, grey-headed, piteous-looking old man! Not one scarcely remained who had known or remembered the boy. Sires and grandsires had talked, indeed, of such an one, who had once been amongst

them, but who, like Rip Van Winkle, had disappeared so long ago, that not only no vestige, but scarcely even the memory of him remained. And if truth were told, one can hardly doubt that such faint traditions of the poor fellow as had survived, and the circumstances under which he might almost be said to have vanished from the scene, together with the natural propensity of village gossip, and, indeed, of human nature anywhere and everywhere to slide into the marvellous, had invested him with somewhat of fabulous interest, and, it may be, even with extra proportions of stature and strength, so that when the poor shivering, stunted, and deformed cripple stood at that school-room door, it was no wonder that he was at first neither recognised nor acknowledged, and was looked upon, as indeed he was, as some wandering miserable mendicant seeking casual relief and shelter from the storm.

In his simplicity, indeed, as he afterwards mentioned, he had thought he should find his old master, if not with ferule in hand, at least on the same spot and place of power, where, nearly forty years before, he had trembled at his frown. The change wrought by time had been so gradual and imperceptible to himself, it had been by such minute and petty touches, "here a little, and there a little," that the deep lineaments and wrinkles of age had worked their way in his own furrowed cheek. Age creeps so stealthily on us all; and though every day it gains

a step, yet its foot-fall is so noiseless, and its progress so minute, moment by moment, that I can readily believe many a man is startled and taken by surprise, when he awakes one morning, and finds that it is the morning of his sixtieth birth-day. Poor COOPER, however, in one sense had never been a boy; he had known nothing of its happy joyousness, and age had scarcely made any change in those inward feelings with which he had from the first looked upon himself,

> "as an ocean-weed uptorn,
> And loose along the world of waters borne."

My readers will remember that I am writing of an incident which occurred more than a quarter of a century ago; and before the present halcyon days, when surly porters at union-gates scowl angrily at, and fiercely chide, the houseless wanderer who solicits shelter, or selfish interested guardians bandy the unhappy applicant from union to union, and from parish to parish, till, happily, in many an instance, death steps in during the process, takes the matter into his own hands, and summarily relieves both parties—the one from his misery, and the other from the encumbrance. Though investigation, therefore, was made, poor COOPER'S claim was soon allowed, and once more the unhappy wanderer found shelter amid the scenes and memories of his boyhood.

CHAPTER VI.

Of how many a returning prodigal may we truly say this poor man's lot was but an epitome! He had not, it is true, gone forth into the world with buoyant hope, nor had he quitted the gentle restraints nor forsaken the counsels of a kind and indulgent father; but still he had gone trusting to his own guidance, and perhaps confident in his own strength; and he had thought to hew out to himself a path which should bring him peace, if not joy, in the seeking. Alas! through how many years of misery and trial had he sought a resting-place for his feet, and a shelter for his head, and had found none, till at length he dragged his tottering steps to the spot from whence he set out! In all probability he had been put to as miserable shifts, and had found the world as selfish and callous, as the prodigal in the parable; but no thoughts of a holy and endeared home, or loving inmates of that home, could mingle with his remembrance; and of a heavenly Father, or of the Saviour who was, during all those years, yearning over him with unutterable tenderness, he knew next to nothing.

On the past, however, he had been almost impenetrably silent, whether from shame at the detail, or dislike to be an object of curiosity, I can hardly say,

though I suspect it was the former. To myself, indeed, after a time, he was gradually more communicative; and had I pressed him closely, he would in all probability have given me more lengthened details; but I saw that it gave him pain, and I felt that I had no right for mere curiosity to probe a sore so festering and so painful, and from which he so evidently shrunk in horror. I ascertained, however, sufficient to inform me that he had made his way up to the metropolis, and had there known all the horrors, squalidness, starvation, trial, temptation, and sin of a London beggar-boy,—such as we may conceive them to have been, before a Shaftesbury ennobled humanity and rank by lifting the miserable children of guilt and shame out of the mire, and teaching them that they had souls to save, and that there were some few, at least, who cared for their souls. Poor COOPER'S knowledge of his cobbler's trade was too scanty to secure employment, save of the lowest class, and at most precarious and distant intervals; his frame betokened no strength nor sinew for sturdier labours; and so, as he could neither administer to the pleasures nor the wants of others, he was unscrupulously pushed on one side to perish in a gutter or a doorway, beneath a bridge's arch, or by the side of a brick-kiln or a glass-house, just as chance might present each, or any, or none, to the unbefriended orphan. On one point however he distinctly assured me, perhaps with somewhat of pardonable pride,

that he had never been led astray; that he had never, even in his utmost need, forfeited his honesty. Often, no doubt, his necessities and destitution tempted him; still oftener had he been solicited, urged, and even threatened and driven out for the purpose. His stunted form and dwarfish stature no doubt recommended him to the experienced cracksman for an useful pioneer; and solicitations, offers, and even threatened vengeance, had been alike employed to entice him into crime; but he sturdily refused to listen to every overture, and preferred to starve rather than to steal. And yet there was no doubt he had been in most of the prisons of the metropolis—he indeed confessed as much; his very helplessness rendered him a prey to the more artful and designing, and he often bore the penalty of offences he had resolutely refused to commit. As in his native village he had been the foot-ball of every heartless boy who exceeded him in strength—and that included all,—so here in London he was too frequently made the scapegoat of more artful villains; and as he had no ostensible means of subsistence, it was perhaps no unnatural conclusion of the Dogberrys and Bumbles of the day, nor perhaps unfair inference even of magisterial logic, that he who begged thieved also. Poor Cooper was soon therefore, to use his own phrase, "hounded out" of London; it was indeed in those days no place for the friendless, the penniless, and the honest. He had not the resource of the unjust

steward; for though, like him, he could not dig, he had no master to defraud, even if he had the inclination, and though not ashamed to beg, yet too often thrust aside and pushed from his beat by the more systematic trade of the trained mendicant. The metropolis therefore had not softened COOPER'S feelings towards his kind, nor led him to look upon his fellow-men with less of bitterness and rancour.

This then was his second lesson in the cold, unfeeling selfishness of the world, and we may well believe the poor fellow learned it thoroughly by heart.

I do not think that the country showed him a much kinder aspect. He told me he had traversed every part of Great Britain and Ireland, endeavouring, as far as he could, to pick up the scantiest subsistence, partly by begging, and partly by the sale of such humble articles as he could get together. Tract-selling or colportage, now so valued and honourable a livelihood to many, had hardly begun its career, and at any rate was in those days in the worst of odour; and to have proffered a tract at any door would have insured the expulsion of the offender with as much celerity and horror as if he had presented himself with the small-pox or the plague. One would hope indeed, for the sake of our common nature, that the whole land, from Dan even to Beer-sheba, was not altogether barren, that every door was not barred, and every heart closed against the poor outcast. Yet charity, in its lowest aspect, flung but a niggard dole,

and in its highest Christian character was utterly withheld; and COOPER had still to learn that there was One whose love was far beyond human love—which never wearied, never turned aside in contempt or disgust, and to whom "the beggar on the dung-hill" and "Lazarus full of sores" were as precious as the signet on His right hand or the jewel in His crown, and alike welcome with the monarch on his throne or the noble in his hall.

I one day took advantage of a confidential, communicative frame of mind, in which I found COOPER, to ask him if he had ever revisited or sought for knowledge of his family, or any renewal of intercourse with the brother he so justly loved. I have already stated that the father had outlived most of his children, and the mother her husband; but I have omitted to state that for some years her reason had failed, and even if her wanderer had returned to forgive or to curse, she would have been beyond its influence and its hearing. The frame remained, but the intellect had fled; and the bed-rid idiot was now a more melancholy object than the distorted cripple had ever been; but, more fortunate than he, had found a safe asylum in the house of her son Charles.

"Did you ever," I asked him, "meet any of your family again, or re-seek your brother Charles?"

"I never saw father nor mother; nay, I 'm wrong there, for I did see mother once. I often wandered about near, and heard about them, but I never heard

there was much difference in them, and that they were going on in the same rackety shambling manner, and so I never went nigh; and I took pretty good care that nobody should guess who I was, and carry tales to them, even if they had cared about the matter, which I do n't suppose they did."

"How was it, then, that you saw your mother?" I inquired.

"Oh! that was many years afterwards. I had been a long while absent and far away from them all, and had never heard a word about any of them; and I do n't know how it was, but I had a sort of feeling that I should like to hear about them, and specially Charles, and so I worked my way upwards, and heard that father was dead, and that Charles was married and was living in the very town you went to see him at; and I thought I would go and see if he knowed me, and would own me still."

"Well," I said, "did he recognise you? You must have been strangely altered from the little boy he had remembered."

"It was a Sunday evening that I got to the town, and I felt sure I should find him at home; and somehow I remembered he was always kinder and gentler on that day than any other, and I was very glad I had so chanced it on a Sunday."

"Well, did you find him at home?"

"I crept, sir, to the door, as if I had been a guilty thing, and yet I knew I was n't; my heart beat so, I

thought it would have burst, and I trembled all over; so that I 'm sure people must have thought me very queer; but, luckily, brother's house was up a little court, and there was no one nigh."

"I can well understand your feelings," I said, "and honour them too."

"I do n't know about that, sir: it made me think almost I was doing wrong to shake and tremble in the way I did; and so I took a peep in at the window first, which was a little open,—and there was Charles! I knew him instantly, though so much altered; but I have n't known so many people as showed me kindness as to be puzzled to remember all their faces,—at any rate, I knew him in a moment. He had a little table afore him, and his children, I think three of them, were by his side, and a little one on his knee, and he was reading to them, I suppose from the Bible; and I knew then he was all right. I was quite sure his heart would leap up to mine, and I was just a-going to rush in, and cry out 'Charles, Charles, I 'm poor little COOPER;' but I did n't."

"Why did n't you?" I asked; "what stopped you?"

He was silent for a moment or two, and then he slowly answered, looking me full in the face,

"I saw mother: I had never thought of finding her here. Somehow, I had never thought of her at all. I knew father was dead, and I suppose I took it for granted that she was dead also; or my heart was so full of my brother, that I never had a thought or

idea about her; but there, on that blessed evening, I saw her. She was in bed, but sitting bolt upright, and you 'd have thought listening to brother's reading. But, oh," he added, "I can never forget her look then. I used to tremble at her as a little boy, but I never felt as I did then. I could n't understand it, and I stood looking and looking, as if I was glued to the place, till Charles shut the book. I could n't have gone in—I could n't have spoken to mother. I did n't feel angry with her: I can't tell what it was, but I felt if she had spoken to me I must have died on the spot; and I turned away. I could n't help bursting into tears as I said, 'GOD bless you, Charles; you little think who 's been at your door.' But I did n't stop—and I did n't stop all night; and I never saw mother afterwards."

CHAPTER VII.

THE particulars recorded in the preceding chapters, scanty as they are, were only gleaned with considerable trouble, and at distant intervals. I now thoroughly understood the full meaning of Charles Gent's observation respecting his brother, that "he rolled himself up like a hedgehog, and that there was no getting at him." COOPER had, indeed, a most

thorough aversion to confidential details; the organ of communicativeness, if there be such a bump in man's cranium, was most slenderly developed in him. He had no propensity to spinning long yarns on his own adventures or misadventures. He loved far better to brood in solitary misanthropy over what he naturally deemed his wrongs, and the injustice of his fellow-men; and if he indulged in no bitter invectives against their unkindness, it was not because he felt it not, but because from his earliest childhood he had found no sympathy in any living bosom, and the current of kindly feeling had been dammed up in its very source. He had probably never heard of Jonah, but he had Jonah's unregenerate feelings in his heart; and had persuaded himself that he was doing well to be angry, because his gourd of earthly comfort had withered in its very birth.

It had been towards the end of the week that I had paid that first visit recorded in the first chapter of this narrative, and Sunday had necessarily intervened before I could again visit his abode. I did not at all anticipate that on this, the first Sabbath, Cooper would be found among the worshippers in the Lord's house. I had, indeed, alluded to his previous absence, but I had not urged his attendance in more than general terms; and had, in fact, felt that there was a good deal more of quiet removal of incrustation, ere I ventured to press even this important and essential duty. I knew, indeed, that if

the tree were good, the fruit would be good also; to keep up the Scriptural metaphor, I hardly expected to find grapes clustering or figs ripening on the wild thorn or the prickly bramble, yet I felt assured that if the love of GOD were shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost, all its holy fruits and effects would as naturally follow as the fountain sends forth only fresh water. Anxious, therefore, as I might be for the development of all the outward evidences of a renewed spirit, I was far more anxious that his obedience in this respect should be the result of his own convictions and the workings of his own grateful heart, rather than deference to my wishes, or a mixed idea of duty with a desire to insure my favour, or secure the approval of any earthly being.

Still, I cannot deny that on the following Sunday I did cast a somewhat anxious glance on the little cluster of poor men, who sat apart in their own seat, and whose faces had already become as familiar to me as the words of the book from which I read, and on whose upturned earnest looks I always gazed with peculiar interest, as in a great measure identified with that class to whom the prophet foretold the Gospel *should be*, and the Saviour declared it *was*, preached. I can hardly say there was surprise, but there certainly was a lingering feeling of disappointment, that I saw him not.

I therefore commenced as usual, though, perhaps

unconsciously, even with deeper and more solemn feeling, from the thought of the poor outcast,—

"When the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive."

This sentence has always struck me as possessing singular beauty and appropriateness in heading our devotional services, leading the heart, at one and the same time, to the source of sorrow and yet of consolation, laying bare the wound and applying the healing balm. Connected, too, as it so generally is, with the declaration of St. John, that "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us," and followed, too, by the confession that we are "miserable offenders," and that "there is no health in us," it forms altogether such a Scriptural, touching, and awakening introduction to devotion, that he must possess a heart sadly occupied with worldly cares, or miserably defective in self-knowledge, on whom its statements fall not with convincing power. I always feel a peculiar pleasure in bearing testimony, however feeble I know it to be, to the excellences of our Prayer-book in its Sabbath services. I do not say that it is free from defect—it is the work of man; but like those breezes, which "blow from Ceylon's spicy isle," and which waft their fragrance in every breath of air, so the Sabbath services of our Prayer-book are so imbued with Scripture truth and

Scripture language, that almost every sentence tells of the holy clime which gave it birth.

The most prominent object in our poor man's seat was a tall muscular shepherd of threescore and upwards, whose bald head and patriarchal countenance always formed conspicuous landmarks, and whose earnest look of reverence always reminded me of "The Shepherd of Salisbury Plain," and on whose character I often thought he had moulded his own. He knew indeed the tract well, and in one instance especially was most laudably anxious to imitate his prototype, and that was, not merely in his regular, but his early attendance at the house of GOD—not merely to drop in at any period of the service, as so many stragglers do, as accident or caprice directed, but, like my old friend Mr. Eveling, for whom he had often worked, and whose training I so frequently detected, to be there from the very beginning, and lose no portion of the banquet provided; for, as one truly observes,* "those who are at pains to attend worship are not likely to find the Lord invites to an empty entertainment."

Many a time had Master Elliott lingered over the necessary cares of his flock, and tarried in his fold or his sheep-pen, long after the church-clock had announced his mid-day hour of dinner; but I believe no earthly incident or anxiety, save perhaps the dying hour of a wife or child, would have detained his steps a mo-

* Vanderkiste's "Dens of London."

ment after he caught the first sound of the church bell. The instant that reached his ear, he took up his staff, just such an one as I could imagine the patriarchs or the pilgrim-fathers had used in their wilderness-wanderings, and away he trudged to the church of his fathers. I do not think that a labourer very often encumbers himself with a staff, even in old age, unless crippled, and for actual use and support; but I have generally observed that a shepherd does far more frequently carry such an appendage in his walks: perhaps his hand misses the accustomed crook, and feels awkward and out of place without something to grasp; but, be the notion what it may old John Elliott's black-thorn was almost as well known as his bald head.

He has been long in his grave, but I think I see him now, as I saw him many and many a Sabbath, seated on an old oblong pedestalled sort of tomb in the churchyard, his invariable position, and which commanded a view of his minister's approach; and the moment he saw him reach a certain point, he arose and entered the church, almost always the first occupant of what was called, perhaps somewhat invidiously, "the poor pew;" but it wounded no man's feelings, and one was glad that they had sittings at all!

As my eye rested on old John Elliott's bald head, I could not help for a moment contrasting his position with that of poor COOPER; the one conscious of his privilege, and glad and grateful to avail himself of

it; and the other, poor fellow! ignorant that the same welcome extended to him also. And the thought even then suggested itself to me, that I would get old John, in his plain simple pious way, to talk to COOPER about his own Sabbath experiences and enjoyments. At this juncture a slight movement made by the shepherd, preparatory to his kneeling down in prayer, showed me another figure by his side, which I instantly recognised as that of the poor dwarf. He had apparently come early also, that he might attract no notice by his arrival, and probably felt glad to screen himself from observation by the more brawny frame of his neighbour; and I could not help hoping, from my knowledge of the old shepherd's habits, that, as he sat on the old tombstone, he had impounded COOPER by the way, talked kindly to him, and as it were taken him into the church and placed him at his own side, at once protecting him from idle jeer or unkind observation.

I was now perfectly satisfied, and indeed grateful, and the service proceeded to its close. In the pulpit, indeed, my higher position gave me the means of seeing the poor fellow more plainly; but his looks were always downcast, as if unwilling to lift an eye lest he should detect a sneer or smile, though in all probability few, except those immediately about him, could have known his presence. But the ear was at least open, and I hoped the heart also; and I was content to commend the matter in silent prayer, and

leave the result to Him whose gracious leading had brought him there. It was the custom in my congregation, at the close of the service, for every individual to remain standing in his seat, till the minister had quitted the church; certainly a far more decorous and seemly proceeding than the irreverent and hurried bolting out of boys and others, the very instant, nay, often before, the last words are uttered. As I passed down the aisle, greeting the various members of my flock, and receiving in return their respectful and affectionate salutations, I cast a glance of approving recognition on my poor friend, with a determination in my own mind that the next day should find me a visitant at his house. As I passed the old shepherd, and his head was bowed low enough to catch his ear, I whispered as I went on, "John, you had better walk home with poor GENT," to which, without uttering a word, he nodded a most intelligent assent, which seemed to say as plainly as eyes could speak, "Aye, aye, I'll take him in tow again." And I thus felt satisfied that, by this slight precaution, his first visit to the house of GOD would be associated with no painful recollections.

CHAPTER VIII.

COOPER had probably guessed at my purpose. I will not wrong him by supposing that his attendance at church on the preceding day had been with a view to draw me to a second visit, for I had promised to see him again, and that very soon. But he had evidently, if I may so express it, made a sort of preparation in anticipation of my coming; at least, in the midst of all his privations and discomforts, there was a neatness and regularity which I had not witnessed on my former unexpected visit. His bed, instead of being huddled up in a sort of tumbled roll upon the floor, was smoothed down, as if ready for its occupant; his scanty fire sent not up that stifling smoke, which before had nearly blinded my eyes and choked my breath; and on his bench, by his side, was laid, evidently not for ostentation, but with certain visible finger-marks of its having been handled, one of the little tracts I had left with him.

In another respect, too, a visit to a poor man on a Monday has great advantages over one on a Saturday; and whatever may be said in these days of revival of the dignity, the gracefulness, or the naturalness of beards, and however their growth may be defended on the score of manhood, sanitary principles, economy of time and trouble, or any other motive that in-

genuity may allege, I still beg leave to assert that, however attractive or satisfactory the full-grown article may be in its complete and perfect growth, and whatever feelings of admiration or awe the spectator may look on the matured gracefulness of its *dependency*, still its incipient and progressive growth is anything but inviting and attractive. I do not wonder at King David bidding his servants, who had been somewhat unceremoniously and uncourteously denuded of their beards, tarry at Jericho till they were re-grown, and once more fit to be seen; and I therefore repeat the remark, that, in my estimation, Monday is a far more engaging day to look a poor man in the face than a Saturday. Of course we know it makes no real difference, and an honest man's heart beats as true at the beginning as at the end of the week, though his chin may not look so sleek at the close as at the commencement, and more resembles "a stubble-field at harvest-home" than, as Johnson says, "a lawn mown by the scythe and levelled by the roller."

At any rate, COOPER'S whole aspect was much brightened and improved by the Sunday morning's process; and not only that, but it seemed, also, as if his whole frame and bearing told of a happier spirit, and as if, for the first time in his life, he had felt the electric spark of human sympathy thrill through his heart; or I should, perhaps, go beyond that, and say that a spark from on high had kindled a hope in his

hitherto benighted soul, to which it had been altogether a stranger. On the solitary shelf which contained all his earthly goods, or which, at least, served him for pantry and larder and all, I espied carefully laid up the Bible I had lent him; and though it was but a simple, yet still it was an expressive indication of a right feeling, that he had covered it with some of the leather which his trade supplied, scanty as his store was. Altogether, the glance (for it was scarcely more) with which I took in the whole appurtenances of COOPER, himself, his habiliments, and outer man, and his domestic arrangements, were of a most satisfactory nature; and it was with a cheerful tone I said to him,

"Well, MR. GENT, I have not been long in returning your visit; I was glad to see you in my Master's house yesterday, and I have come to say to you how welcome you were, and how welcome you will continue to be."

"I was almost afraid to come, sir," was his reply, "and when the morning came, I had almost made up my mind to keep away, as I thought some of the chaps might be jeering at me; but, somehow, when the bells began to chime, they seemed to sound, 'Come along, COOPER,—come along, COOPER,' just as I had heard say, up in London, some Lord Mayor once heard them ring in his own ears."

"You mean Whittington," I said.

"Yes, sir, that was the name; and though I knew

it was n't so really, it did sound so natural, like, and each time it seemed to say the words, 'Come along, COOPER," so clear that I set off, and got there as quick as could be, before the neighbours were out of their doors. Master Elliott, however, was afore me, for I saw him sitting on a tomb-stone when I came up, and he said, 'Well, Master Gent, I'm right glad to see you,' and held out his hand, and that cheered me up; and I do believe, as you say, sir, that I was not only welcome, but invited too. Do you think, sir," he added, looking up in my face with a strange mixture of shyness and shrewdness, "do you think as how GOD Almighty would send a message by those bells to such a poor creature as me?"

"I have not the least doubt in the world," I said, "that He who came to this earth on the express errand to seek and to save that which was lost, would send such a message and invitation of love to the poorest and most abject; and the poorer and the more lost they were, the more the objects of His interest and love: and though I do not say that GOD put a tongue into those bells to utter those identical words which you thought you heard, yet I can well believe that He gave an impulse to your heart as well as to your ear, so as to fashion the sound the bells gave into those syllables which you describe as so clearly bidding you to 'come along.'

"I see your Bible has been in your hands since I left it with you, and I doubt not you have opened

as well as covered it; but just let me read you one passage."

And I took it down as I spoke, and while turning to the passage I wanted, I said,

"GOD once, Mr. Gent, in His mercy, would have hindered a foolish and a wicked man from going on in a way in which He had forbidden him to go, and which would have led, and did indeed lead, to his destruction; and for this purpose He put a voice into a dumb animal, that so singular a circumstance might awaken and alarm his conscience. These are the words:

"'The dumb ass, speaking with man's voice, forbade the madness of the prophet.'

"And, therefore, though the days of actual miracles have ceased, and those bells did not in reality utter the words 'Come along, COOPER,' yet I know that the words of Jesus to you, and to me, and to every sorrowing and travailing one on earth, are, 'Come unto ME, all ye that travail and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.' And I know, too, my poor friend, for our blessed comfort—for His own word says it—'The Spirit and the Bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come: and let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.' These are precious words for you, Mr. Gent; not the mere sympathy of a fellow-creature like myself, not the words of kindness from Master Elliott to cheer you on, but

the sympathy and the loving-kindness of the heart of GOD Himself, the very words of GOD, the very invitation of Jesus to come and take of the water of life freely."

He did not at the moment answer, but seemed lost in reflection, as if trying to recollect something, and at last said,

"It is very odd, sir, but Master Elliott spoke those very words to me yesterday, and I did n't then know they were Bible words. I thought it queer as how Master Elliott should speak so sure of every one being welcome, and did n't know he was speaking out of book."

I was glad to find that the old shepherd had so readily and ably carried out my purpose of accompanying the poor fellow home, but I merely said,

"What! did he walk home with you from church?"

"Yes, sir; he said as how he wanted to go my way, and would just walk with me; and though I did n't tell him all I 've told you about those bells, for fear he might laugh at me, I did say as how I feared I was too poor a creature to mix equal, like, with him and such as him, as had known and served GOD so long; and then it was he said those very words."

"It is not the minister only, you see," I said, "by whom GOD sends His messages, and I 'm very glad to find that He sent that message first by old John Elliott, and what you thought were his words turned out to be no other than GOD'S own words. Old John," I said, "is a good Bible scholar, and seldom

forgets a text: GOD'S Holy Spirit engraves it on his heart, so it 's never worn away."

"I somehow thought yesterday," replied COOPER, "when I came to think over it, that Master Elliott had n't much to do my way, and that he just came to talk kindly, like, with me; and he said he 'd come again to-night after work, for he 'd got a job that wanted a bit patching, and he could sit with me while I mended it for him."

"Well," I said, "it will be a great comfort to you to have half an hour's talk with him; he is no idle gossip, and, I really believe, loves more to talk of his Master's, I mean his heavenly Master's, goodness than of any other thing. His occupation, like yours, is somewhat of a solitary one; for though he has plenty of companions about him in his sheep, they are not very talkative ones; though, I dare say, he understands a good deal of their language and they of his, yet there is not much conversation going on between them, and he too has a good many precious hours for meditation and communion with GOD. And if *you* come to love, and to fear, and to serve GOD as fervently and as faithfully as I believe he does, you and he may find much pleasure and much profit in talking to one another of the things of GOD, of comparing your mutual experiences, and, as this book says, 'building up one another on your most holy faith.' And, depend upon it," I added, "the Lord takes special notice of such conversation, even though it

be between a poor humble shepherd, like John Elliott, and an unlearned cobbler, such as you. I will just read to you what his own book says about this, before I go."

And I opened the Bible once more, and repeated—

"Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard it; and a book of remembrance was written before Him, for them that feared the Lord and that thought upon His name.

"And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day, when I make up my jewels."

As I had read the various texts I had repeated to him, I inserted marks in the Bible, to enable him to refer to them at his leisure, and I said,

"Just talk over this text, which I have just read, with Master Elliott to-night, when he pays his promised visit, and ask him what he thinks about it. I dare say, many a time when he and some brother by the way have been walking home from their work at evening, and taking sweet counsel together, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God, Jesus has joined Himself to them; and though they could not see Him, yet their hearts have burned within them, as they felt His presence and His Spirit with them; and when they have reached their own door, Jesus has gone in with them, and tarried with them; or as He himself says, 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open

to me, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me.' "

"I thought, sir," said my poor friend in reply, "as how the Bible was a very old book, and written a great many ages ago."

"So it was," I said: "'holy men *of old* spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.' Its first book was written more than 4000 years ago, and its last nearly 1800. But why do you ask?" I inquired.

"Why, sir, because those texts you have picked out to-day, and one or two I heard you read when you were here before, just seemed specially written for us now, as if they were a message sent on purpose for such poor creatures as myself; and I dare say, when you read it to others, you find messages just as much sent to them, and they too think it written for themselves."

"Exactly so," I said; "and the reason is not merely that heart answereth to heart, as face answereth to face in water, and that every human heart is alike bound by the same ties, saddened by the same sorrows, and subject to the same trials; for this is not always, nor literally true; but I believe the reason is, that from everlasting GOD saw what would be in every heart, influenced by the same passions, and assailed by the same enemies, and walking in the midst of the same temptations, and so adapted His message to man and man's wants and necessities as a poor helpless perishing sinner, in suffering because in sin, and

offering the one only remedy for man's disease, even a full and free pardon through the blood of Christ, and with the tenderness of a loving Father entering into all the details of His child's case, and applying His own healing balm to the wound; and this I believe to be the reason why each one individually finds in GOD'S word so much that applies to his own condition, and seems to speak to his own heart, and so much that he can take home to his own soul's comfort. And the more, MR. GENT, you study that sacred volume, the more will you be led to exclaim with one of old, as he meditated on the wonders of redeeming love, 'Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of GOD!'"

I was very anxious before I left him that we should kneel together in prayer: it would probably be the first time he had ever prayed, in secret at least. Childhood could have taught him no prayer—a mother's lips had never breathed or syllabled a prayer in his hearing, and from his father's he had heard only oaths and angry words. In his miserable youth, in London, prayer must have been even still more a stranger to him; and in his wanderings afterwards, one can hardly imagine that a tramper's life and a tramper's casual home could ever cherish or encourage holy prayer. It was an awful thought, that perhaps for nearly threescore of years he had never uttered a word of prayer in the posture of prayer; yet prayer must have been at times in his heart—un-

defined, unknown prayer—something that was a breathing forth of want and misery, some inarticulated, unsyllabled feeling of prayer, which the Lord, even then, had put into his heart, and inclined his own ear to listen to. I did not, however, make any allusion to the past, but simply saying, "Mr. Gent, before we part, let us kneel down and pray;" and suiting the action to the word, I found him kneeling by my side, and, like a thirsty soil long deprived of moisture, drinking in the grateful droppings of the summer shower.

CHAPTER IX.

MANY were the visits which from time to time I made to poor COOPER, and the conversations that passed between us, which I need not, however, here detail, at least with any accuracy as to order or time. His was indeed no instantaneous conversion from a life of practical ungodliness to a saving faith as it is in Jesus. He had, it is true, in some measure answered to the first call, but there was a vast amount of incrustation to be got rid of—some deeply inveterate stains and spots, which kept continually protruding themselves, and the old Adam of suspicious misanthropy, for a time at least, was ever and anon

showing itself, even amid all the evidences of kindness so novel and so strange to him.

It must be remembered, too, that his mind was indeed a blank as to religious knowledge or godly feeling; when I first saw him, more than half a century had passed over him, and no man had cared for his soul—nay, he had not even cared for it himself. Day after day and year after year had uttered no wisdom nor holy truth to his heart; he had laid himself down to sleep, like the cattle on a hill-side, just where chance had caused his feet to stroll, and had again risen to pursue his wandering course, satisfied if the day brought bread and the night repose, and not unfrequently content without either, and yet all the time as apparently unconscious of any work of GOD within or without him as the clod of the soil, beneath which the seed nestles, and at length in GOD's own time springs up into blade and ear. He knew indeed that he was a sinner, and he felt in the very bitterness of his heart that he had long been an alien from GOD; but he knew little or nothing of the source or of the depths of sin. He hoped for pardon, because he was assured that GOD was merciful, but he had never heard of an atonement or the atoning blood of Jesus, and it was indeed difficult at first to make out what part in man's salvation he conceived Jesus to take. I suspect his creed was very much like that of so many others, that he was himself to do all—to repent as much as he could, to abstain from what was wrong

as far as he could, and to do what was right as far as he could; and as he could not but feel that a great deal was left undone that ought to be done, Jesus was in some way or other to make up the deficiency and put all to rights. At the first, too, he fastened with much delusive satisfaction on such texts as seemed to him to intimate that religion did not require the same from the poor and ignorant as it did from the better-educated, and those whose opportunities were more ample; as if there was one way to heaven for the unlearned and the poor, and another way for the scholar and the rich: and I remember his pointing out to me one day, with eager satisfaction, the text in St. Luke's Gospel, where our Lord makes the distinction between the punishment of the servant that knew his Lord's will and did it not, and him that knew it not; that the one should be beaten with many, and the other with few, stripes. As if, because to whomsoever much was given, of him much would be required, the converse of the proposition was necessarily true, and that to whom little was given, of him would little be required,—and, he added, "Ah, sir, that is indeed a comfort to poor folks that are no scholars!"

"True, my friend," I replied, "it is a blessed consolation to feel that we serve no hard task-master, who expects to reap where He has not strewed; or who will exact the duties which, in His wisdom, He has denied us the power to fulfil; and I doubt not that

you will, with His blessing, in GOD'S own time, feel the comfort of this text; at present it hardly belongs to you."

"How so?" was his somewhat surprised inquiry. "I don't think, at any rate, people will say I am one to whom much has been given."

"Perhaps not," I said. "Of course I do not mean to say, nor would it be the truth, that much had been given you of this world's good things, nor do I mean to say, from what I have heard, that your childhood and youth, nor, perhaps, even your whole life, has furnished you with such abundant opportunities and advantages as are vouchsafed to many of your more fortunate brothers and sisters in the world; but still, in many a way and for many a year, much has been given you: and though you may have thought it little, and called it little, have you made the most you could of that little? If, according to our Lord's parable, He has not committed to your charge ten pounds to trade with, He has assuredly given you one pound; what have you done with that one?"

It was a melancholy reply which he made:

"I don't know, sir, that I ever had one. I seem to myself to have been from first to last a poor foot-ball of a chap, kicked about everywhere and by everybody."

"Well, Mr. Gent," I said, "let us just reason this matter together a few moments, and I think you will own that even to such an one as you far more

has been vouchsafed than to many poor perishing ones elsewhere.* It is true you have been a wanderer all your days, but you have never wandered beyond the reach of gospel truth, or the sound of the Sabbath-bell; and though childhood gave you few privileges, and fewer friends, it still taught you how to read, and placed you in a land of Bibles. You could not hide your head in any corner of the land where the ministers of the gospel were not heard, and where, at least for one day of the week, you might hear GOD'S word read and expounded to you. You are now, I should think, nearly sixty years of age; and of those years, eight, at least, have been made up of Sabbath-days alone, on every one of which GOD sent an especial message of love and mercy to your soul. I do not say you went to hear it, but still it was sent; and, I think, when a loving Father has sent, day after day, and week after week, and year after year, for threescore years, a loving message and invitation to an erring child to come and return to Him, and has not been wearied nor worn out by that child's ungrateful disobedience and rejection, but has still continued calling and entreating,—I think, I say, much has been given to that child, even though he does not see it, or will not own it.

* "I was not born, as thousands are,
Where GOD was never known,
And taught to pray an useless praye-
To blocks of wood and stone."

Miss. Juven. Instructor.

No! depend upon it, Mr. Gent, if God says even of the heathen, that they are without excuse, the very poorest and most ignorant in a Christian land are utterly without a plea; for they have ears, but will not hear; and eyes have they, but will not see."

I have already mentioned, as one of the striking characteristics of his London life, his strict avoidance of all dishonesty; and that neither the solicitations nor the threats of others, nor his own craving wants and frequently destitute condition, could even induce him to appropriate to his own use what belonged to another. He was as scrupulous as the patriarch of old, and might have said to every man, woman, and child in the metropolis, and throughout Great Britain, that "he had not taken from a thread to a shoe-latchet of anything that was theirs:" and I was anxious to ascertain, if I could, what was the restraining motive, so powerful even in the very midst of the most urgent temptation. It might be curiosity, but I think it was a higher motive, which led me to seek, if I could find, that dormant germ of grace, which through so long a wintry season God had permitted to lie unheeded and choked amid such a mass of weeds and briars,—which, to human eye, had not seemed to exist at all, but which yet God's own hand had sown, and He would not, therefore, suffer finally to perish.

I one day said to him, "Cooper,"—I had become more familiar with him as our intimacy progressed,

and had discarded the "Mr. Gent" of earlier days, as an inconvenient hindrance,—"Cooper, I want to know a little more about your London days;—do n't wince," I said, seeing he was preparing to roll up in his old fashion as a hedge-hog. "I only want you to tell me how it was, that while everything and everybody were driving you the other way, you still stuck to the straight road of honesty. There must have been many a starving day, which amid the temptations of London whispered in your ear, 'eat, drink, and be merry,'—and perhaps a tempter also at your elbow, who called you a fool for your pains in having a moment's hesitation about the matter."

"Aye, sir," was his reply, and I could see him uncoil immediately, for he had no small pride at first about the matter,—"aye, sir, you may swear to that. I never knew what it was to have enough of victuals, though I have often known what it was to have too little of them, and many a day to have none at all: and then I do n't deny I 've been hard put to it to keep down the tempter. An empty stomach, sir, has got a queer way of making itself heard, and is uncommon 'cute as to reasons why, and I was often almost nonplussed to answer them. I did n't much mind what other folks said to 'tice me wrong; but when the tempter 's inside of one, it 's a very different thing, and somehow I often fancied it had the best of the argument, and was going to give in; but then, sir"—

and here he stopped for an instant, and then added in a lower tone, but of deep feeling—

"I had one reason, that nobody knew nothing about, and that beat all the others out of the field, quite easy like."

I was becoming intensely interested, and said to him,

"What was that? It must have been strong indeed to beat the cravings of a starving man; for I do not imagine at that time you knew much of GOD'S restraining grace, or even of GOD'S commandments, far less of His all-seeing eye."

"Why, sir, you see as how this was it. I may as well tell it you all, for though it is n't much to my credit, it is to my brother Charles's; and that 's a deal better than mine, and I 'm sure I owe it all to him, under GOD."

"Yes," I said, "it is pleasing to see how love of your brother has outlasted all other human affection; and his love for you seems as strong and as childlike as I suppose it must have been when, perhaps, he used to take you on his knees, and talk kindly to you."

"Why, that 's just it, sir. I do believe he must have told you the old story, for I 've often talked of it to him since I 've known more of GOD'S dealings."

"No, I assure you, he never mentioned the subject to me; and indeed, as you know, I have seldom seen him, at least to talk much to him, since I first went to see him at W——h."

"Well then, sir, you have often heard me speak of father and mother; they were not very kind, and mother specially had a great aversion to me—God only knows why, I'm sure I do n't; but somehow she never could abide me. I do n't mean to say as how mother tried to starve me, though I 'm sure she often wished me dead; but there never was a deal of food going at any time in our house, and sisters and brothers always got the best share; the weakest, you know, always go to the wall."

"What," I said, "did Charles ever join in any such unkindness?"

"Oh no! not he—never,—but he was n't often at home at those times; when he was, he always took my part; but what could he do against so many of them, and mother and father too at the head of them?"

"Well, go on with your story."

"Why, you see, sir, I was almost pretty nearly *clammed* * at times; and one day—I do n't know whether I had aggravated mother—I know she aggravated me—she would n't let me have any food at all, but just turned me out of doors, and bade me get a meal of victuals where and how I could, for I should have none there. I do n't know how long I was away; but I remember I went down to what we call the Spinney,—you know it, sir, a few closes below your home meadow,—and there I sat down and cried till

* Clammed, starved; a Provincialism.

I thought my heart would burst, and then fell asleep."

"Go on," I said; "I am deeply interested."

"I don't know how long I slept there, but when I woke up, I crawled home cold and hungry, and when I got there, there were none of them at home, and I got in at the back, and was creeping up to my little bed, and thought how I should like to die. The door of father's and mother's room was open, and I just looked in and saw some money on the table. It was n't more than a shilling and a few halfpence, but there it was. I know now it was the devil himself that made me look that way and see it, and tempted me to take it; but at the time I thought only of my hunger and of my mother's words, to get a meal of victuals how and where I could; and I instantly rushed forward to seize it, and then leave the house as if I'd never returned after mother turned me out: but I did n't take it, after all."

"Why not?" I asked; "what was the thought that so mercifully stopped you in your sin?"

"Oh, it was n't any thought at all; but just as I was going to snatch on it, I felt a hand lay hold on my arm. I was so frightened, I could n't scream out; but I turned round, and there was my brother Charles looking at me so sad and sorrowful, with tears in his eyes."

"How came he there just at that moment?" I asked.

"Why, you see, he was coming home, and seeing me just before him so wan and weariful, like, he quietly kept behind me to see what I was going to do, and in this way had followed me up to mother's room."

"And what did he say to you?"

"At first he merely said, 'My poor Cooper, come with me to your own little room;' and when we got there he sat down on my bed, and took me between his knees—you know, sir, I was never very big—and then looking at me very seriously for some time, he said, 'My poor boy, do you know what you were about doing?'

"'Yes! mother told me to get a meal of victuals how I could.'

"'But not with money that did not belong to you; you did not think she could mean that. Oh, Cooper! I am so glad I was close at hand to stop you.'

"I did not answer, for I could not; so he went on crying, and making me cry too. I can't tell now all he said; for, though it seemed to cut me in two, I can't now remember. I never forgot, however, his saying it was GOD'S command, 'THOU SHALT NOT STEAL;' and I well remember his adding, 'Now, Cooper, these are four very little words, and very easily learned; will you try and remember them, and repeat them every morning and evening of your life? they will save you a great deal of shame and misery, if you do. Promise me, will you, there 's a dear boy?'

And I promised him I never would forget them, and never forget to repeat them, as he wished, every morning and evening."

"And, I suppose," I said, "for many a year, and during all your London days, as Solomon says, you hung that little portion of GOD'S word as a chain about your neck, and without thinking so much of GOD as your brother, it still, through the Lord's mercy, was a lamp unto your feet and a light unto your path, amid all the trials and temptations of ungodly associates and a starving stomach?"

"Yes, sir, it stuck to me like a leech; and as there were not many hours by day or night that I didn't think of my brother, so, somehow or other, ever after, when I did think of him, I always seemed to see him on my little bed, and me between his knees, while he said to me so sadly, yet so kindly, 'Cooper, promise me never to forget those four little words.'"

There was something, to my feelings at least, exquisitely touching in the picture thus brought before me of these two lowly and illiterate brothers, in a poor miserable garret, the one sitting on a truck bed and with his little brother between his knees, and probably his arm affectionately around his neck, and both shedding tears as they looked in each other's faces; while the one taught, and the other learned, the one simple truth out of GOD'S word, which, through the work of the Holy Spirit, was to preserve

a poor erring one from the snare of the devil, and, through the Lord's abundant mercy, was to be remembered amid poverty and destitution, and scenes of the severest trial and temptation—"in weariness and painfulness, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness," amid every hindrance that could check and crush its growth. Yet there it remained by night and by day, in the tramper's lodging, amid the wild revelry and blasphemy and profligacy of the scenes into which he was inevitably thrown, and when he had no lodging at all; and while his fellow-creatures passed the poor outcast in loathing and in scorn, GOD the Father had planted, and GOD the Son cherished, and GOD the Holy Spirit was preserving and keeping alive a seed in that heart, over which, while men slept as well as while men laboured, HE watched, and it grew they knew not how: and it was still growing, though so slowly and imperceptibly, alike when they flung him a miserable alms, or passed him by contemptuously, till, in the Lord's own time and way, it was to spring up into "a tree of righteousness," acknowledged of all to be "the planting of the Lord, that He might be glorified." Surely we might well have said, "This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes."

CHAPTER X.

In one and that a very essential point, the change which had taken place in poor Cooper Gent was attended with a very marked alteration. He was no longer the subject of idle scoff or jest; and even the youngest in the village felt an instinctive reverence for one who walked so humbly with his God, and so meekly with his fellow-men. Something, indeed, might be attributed to the remonstrances I had made to the younger portion of the community more immediately under my control in the village school, and something, no doubt, might be imitated from the respect with which they always saw him treated by the minister and his family; but far more, I am persuaded, was the genuine deference paid to piety and godly humility.

He no longer shrouded himself in the solitude in which I found him, but soon sought out to himself a few companions in his pilgrimage, with whom he was glad to associate in leisure hours and Sabbath evenings; among whom, in Cooper's estimation at least, old John Elliott always held first and foremost place, though, I believe, Will. Holt was looked upon as presiding elder of the little band, whenever he reached home in time for their meetings. Glad and grateful was Cooper when he first took his admitted

seat amid these two or three who met together in the name of Jesus; and glad too were the rest to receive into their little company another brother beloved in the Lord. I can well imagine the mutual edification they both gave and received, though perhaps GENT's wider acquaintance with the world, and the varied aspects under which he had seen it, though not of the fairest and brightest character, still gave him a larger amount of information, and a wider extent of observation from which to draw, than his more stationary companions, one of whom, like the aged gardener in Ausonius, had never stirred beyond the limits of the parish,* and few had extended their peregrinations further than the county town.

In another respect, too, COOPER manifested a most decided and gratifying change; and it was in the exhibition of the same feelings which had been so conspicuous in Mary How, who was indeed still living, and used frequently to converse with poor GENT, either as they returned from the house of GOD in company, or as they sometimes fell in with one another, as Mary was sunning herself at the gable end of the village workhouse. And it is not improbable that with that instinctive appreciation of each other's character as followers of the same Lord and Saviour, which is so well described by the Psalmist when he says, "The secret of the Lord is

* The old man of Verona, "qui suburbium nunquam egressus est."

with them that fear him," Mary How's eye of faith, glancing down into the deep well of COOPER'S heart, saw that spring of real tenderness and human sympathy, which in his childhood had loved to gush up and show itself, as he threw his arms around his brother's neck, and wept there; and which, though dammed up for so many years by the unkindness and selfish wrongs of his fellow-men, was never utterly dried up, and was ready to burst forth again at the first touch of Christian sympathy.

Be the human source however what it may, it was a real delight to my poor friend to go and sit by the bedside of a sick and suffering brother: his own occupations admitted of his going almost at any hour, and for any length of time; and he was so glad to think that he could be of any use or comfort to any living being, and so grateful to be employed in any labour of love, however lowly or trifling, if it could give pleasure to, or lessen the anxiety of another. Poor John Elliott one day had the misfortune to break his leg; and I was really sadly apprehensive that the confinement, and the interruption of his usual habits of action and out-door life, would go very hard with him; and I suspect he had at first the same thoughts for himself. But COOPER was at his bedside almost as soon as he was in it; and after a little time he contrived to transfer his bench and his tools into old Elliott's room, and there he worked and talked away to his own no small happiness, and

Master Elliott's especial contentment. One day, on visiting the crippled man, and finding these operations going on as usual in his chamber, I said—

"Why, Mr. Elliott, you are indeed a fortunate man; for you keep minister, and doctor, and friend, aye, and shoemaker too, all in one, in your own room. It is n't every sufferer that can get such good attendance."

Old Elliott grinned most amiably at COOPER as he said, "Why, sir, as to shoemaking or shoe-mending I do n't want Master Gent's help just at present; but as to all the rest, I do believe if he can't set a bone, he can make broken bones rejoice, for I 've hardly known what it is to be unked* the whole time."

But the days drew near when Israel must die. Poor COOPER'S frame, like Mary How's, I should imagine, even in youth, never betokened long life; and yet, weatherbeaten and knocked about as he had been, he had reached nearly threescore years. No doubt, his early sufferings and lengthened privations had materially contributed to undermine the little strength he had, while they increased the asthmatic oppression under which he had long laboured; and the close confinement in his hovel, with its generally dingy, suffocating atmosphere, from which however no entreaties could induce him to remove, and the stooping position occasioned by his trade, began

* A provincialism for "out of heart" or "cast down."

to develope symptoms of water in the chest, which rapidly issued in complete prostration of strength. Still he complained not, and none, save myself, seemed to be conscious that his end was so nigh. He omitted not his constant attendance at church and at the Lord's table, though the deep and hollow cough, which continually tore him, must have been as painful to himself, as to others it was distressing to hear. He told me, too, that his rest was ever interrupted, and that violent morning perspirations left him so feeble that he was at times unable to rise. I saw indeed that he was totally unfitted to aid himself; and one day I found him in his poor miserable pallet at a late hour; he had been a severe sufferer during a live-long night of restlessness and tossing, and was lying a helpless but unmurmuring being. His cheeks were flushed with the hectic of disease and the exertions of coughing, and his chest heaving with the difficulties of impeded breathing. I saw at once that he must be removed from a tenement which only added to his sufferings; and I told him my apprehensions. They were not new to himself, for he at once replied,

"GOD's time is come, sir; but, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil. His rod and His staff, they shall comfort me. Yes, sir," he added, with much fervour, "this has taught me that He will never leave me, nor forsake me."

As he spoke, he pulled the Bible I had originally given him from beneath his pillow, and showed me

the passage marked down. I was much affected, and said,

"Be assured He will not: whom He loveth, He loveth unto the end. But, my poor friend, something must be done to add to your comforts, or, at any rate, lessen your discomforts; you must not be left to perish here in this solitude. Perhaps your brother could aid you in this extremity."

The workhouse was, indeed, the only refuge in my thoughts, but I did not like to name it, for he had always, in the earlier days of our acquaintance, shrunk from the idea of ending his days there; and I therefore named his brother, in the idea that his affection and advice might soften the necessity, as well as pave the way for what I felt he must come to. I had, however, miscalculated the present workings of his mind, and his reply gave me one more conviction that he had altogether resigned himself into the hands of his God and Saviour,

> Content to lie passive in His hands,
> And know no will but His!

"You are very kind, sir," he said; "but I must not burthen my brother with a dying creature. No, no, there is but one home for me, till the grave takes me, and that is the workhouse. I didn't use to like thinking that it would ever come to that, but I have thought about it a good deal, as I have been lying here, and I ought to be very thankful. Jesus had

not where to lay His head, and yet He mercifully provides a home even for the poor outcast, till He calls me to Himself."

Entertaining such feelings as these, there was but little difficulty in making the necessary arrangements for his removal. In fact, in those days, though there was much in the general management of the poor that was both repulsive and degrading, still the village workhouse was little more than an enlarged labourer's cottage. In our own little village, two or three cottages had been apparently thrown into one, which a respectable labouring man and his wife superintended—the man going out as usual to his day's labour, and the wife looking to the wants and comforts of her inmates. None but the aged and the very young, the infirm and the sick, were admitted there; they all sat together as one family, and looked upon themselves really as such. I do not, however, say that the system was patriarchal or perfect; for, as so much a head was allowed for their maintenance, there was considerable scope for pinching, and an ample margin for the charitable contributions of others. Still, such as it was, it was a vast improvement on poor COOPER'S former condition, and I was contented that such a home was his, though it was a parish workhouse.

I thought it right, however, to communicate to his brother the change in his abode, and the reasons for it, as well as the apprehensions I entertained of poor COOPER'S illness; and in the course of a day or two

he came over, and, as he called first at my house, I accompanied him on his errand.

"You will, I fear, find him worse than, perhaps, you expect," I said, as we walked together; "his days, nay, his hours, I believe, are numbered."

"So are ours, sir. Life is not measured by length of days; and I am far happier to know that my poor brother is on his death-bed, brightened as it is by hope and trust in Jesus, than when he was groping his way in health, but in the dark. I little thought of such a change: what has GOD wrought!"

We soon reached the humble abode; and if no essential change had taken place in the poor man's malady, there was a manifest amendment in his outward circumstances. He was neat in his attire, resigned, and even cheerful in his manner; and as he sate by the fireside with his Bible in his hands, the contrast of the past and the present was so strong, that it at once brought to my mind the description of the unhappy dæmoniac in the Gospel, once living in solitude and misery amid the monuments of the dead, but now "clothed, and in his right mind, and sitting at the feet of Jesus." He was much gratified at his brother's appearance, which was unexpected by him; for he said,

"Ah, sir, this is your doing! I did not mean Charles should have known anything of this, till it was all over;" and then, as if afraid of misconstruction, he immediately added, "but this is far better,

Charles, even than when you saw me last; and everything is better, far better. Sickness is welcome, suffering is welcome, and death itself is welcome, if it lead me to Him. I was a sad misguided creature, but your prayers, Charles, have been heard, and the poor outcast has been brought home even at the eleventh hour."

His brother attempted to reply, but his voice was choked by his tears, though they were tears of chastened joy; and while their hands were clasped together, I could not help exclaiming,

"There is joy in the presence of the angels of GOD over one sinner that repenteth."

I shortly after left the two brothers together; for though, probably, the presence of one whom they looked upon as their common friend would hardly have been considered as a restraint, still there might be communications which I had no right to hear.

The following day saw me again a visitor to my poor friend, and I found him much worse. Whether the interview of the preceding day had been too trying for his weakened frame, or all had now been done which a gracious Father required of His erring child, it was evident that his strength was rapidly sinking. His senses were, however, calm and collected, and though he spoke with difficulty, he still clung in unreserved faith to the hope set before him. I stayed some time with him, and knelt by his side, earnestly

beseeching that his Saviour might be with him, leading him by the hand in every step of his passage through the dark valley he was now about to traverse.

When I quitted him, I promised to call again in the evening; and on so doing, I found that he was indeed dying. His eyes were closed and he apparently recognised no one; but on taking his hand and saying to him, "You know in whom you have believed," he once more opened his dying orbs, and for a moment they almost looked bright and glistening; a smile passed over his quivering lips, and he faintly but distinctly murmured, in the words of England's dying martyr, which he had often heard me quote, "NONE BUT JESUS, NONE BUT JESUS!" and thus he fell asleep.

His brother returned again, to attend his remains to the grave; and a few of those with whom poor COOPER in his latter days had delighted to take sweet counsel, with the two old patriarchs Will Holt and John Elliott, side by side at their head, accompanied him to the grave's edge. Poor fellow! his last thought of earth had been his brother, if not the playmate, at least the prop and guidance, of his childhood: and I can well believe, what Charles himself told me, that the happiest feeling of his heart was realized, when he committed that brother to the grave in sure and certain hope of his resurrection to eternal life; and that his only prayer for himself was, that,

when he should depart this life, he, too, might rest in Jesus, as this his brother did.

In returning from the solemn office of committing his body to the grave, the recollection of poor COOPER still hung over me, and I attempted to give vent to my strangely-mingled feelings in the following lines, with which I close this record of "My Parish."

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Peace to the dead! a greater man
Might here have closed his narrow span,
But none will say, whate'er his form,
'T will not as sweetly feed the worm.
Poor tortuous frame! and is this all
That lies beneath thy scanty pall?
Is all that Faith and Hope can say
But bounded by the mouldering clay?
No! when the Eternal trump shall ring,
And myriads to their judgment bring,
That form, unbow'd, unbent, shall rise,
To join its Saviour in the skies;
That form, to dust in shame consign'd,
A brighter being then shall find;
Though to corruption now a prey,
'T will wing its flight to holier day,
And, clad in everlasting light,
Endure the Godhead's glorious sight,
And, through Redemption's boundless grace,
There see his Saviour face to face.

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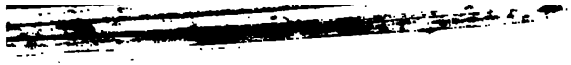
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